

**"When you have robbed a man of everything, he is no longer in your power.  
He is free again."  
Alexander Solzhenitsyn**

## **ZIONISM IN THE AGE OF THE DICTATORS - A REAPPRAISAL**

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(Croom Helm, Kent [GreatBritain] and Laurence Hill, Westport, Conn., 1983)

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**CHAPTER 1: ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM PRIOR TO THE HOLOCAUST**

**CHAPTER 2: BLUT UND BODEN (BLOOD AND SOIL) : THE ROOTS OF  
ZIONIST RACISM**

**CHAPTER 3: GERMAN ZIONISM AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE WEIMAR  
REPUBLIC**

**CHAPTER 4: ZIONISM AND ITALIAN FASCISM, 1922-1933**

**CHAPTER 5: GERMAN ZIONISM OFFERS TO COLLABORATE WITH NAZISM**

**CHAPTER 6: THE JEWISH ANTI-NAZI BOYCOTT AND THE ZIONIST-NAZI  
TRADE AGREEMENT**

**ABBREVIATIONS: at end of document**

**GLOSSARY OF JEWISH AND ZIONIST ORGANISATIONS: at end of document**

## **Preface**

**Why another book on the Second World War, which is probably the most written about subject in human history? Why another book on the Holocaust, which has been movingly described by many survivors and scholars? As a general subject, the age of the dictators, the world war, and the Holocaust have indeed been covered - but has the interaction between Zionism and Fascism and Nazism been adequately explored? And if not, why not?**

**The answer is quite simple. Different aspects of the general subject have been dealt with, but there is no equivalent of the present work, one that attempts to present an overview of the movement's world activities during that epoch. Of course, that is not an accident, but rather a sign that there is much that is politically embarrassing to be found in that record.**

Dealing with the issues brings difficult problems, one of the most difficult arising out of the emotions evoked by the Holocaust. Can there be any doubt that many of the United Nations delegates who voted for the creation of an Israeli state, in 1947, were motivated by a desire to somehow compensate the surviving Jews for the Holocaust? They, and many of Israel's other wellwishers, caught the state with the powerful human feelings they had toward the victims of Hitler's monstrous crimes. But therein was their error: they based their support for Israel and Zionism on what Hitler had done to the Jews, rather than on what the Zionists had done for the Jews. To say that such an approach is intellectually and politically impermissible does not denigrate the deep feelings produced by the Holocaust.

Zionism, however, is an ideology, and its chronicles are to be examined with the same critical eye that readers should bring to the history of any political tendency. Zionism is not now, nor was it ever, coextensive with either Judaism or the Jewish people. The vast majority of Hitler's Jewish victims were not Zionists. It is equally true, as readers are invited to see for themselves, that the majority of the Jews of Poland, in particular, had repudiated Zionism on the eve of the Holocaust, that they abhorred the politics of Menachem Begin, in September 1939, one of the leaders of the self-styled 'Zionist Revisionist' movement in the Polish capital. As an anti-Zionist Jew, the author is inured to the charge that anti-Zionism is equivalent to anti-Semitism and 'Jewish self-hatred'.

It is scarcely necessary to add that all attempts to equate Jews and Zionists, and therefore to attack Jews as such, are criminal, and are to be sternly repelled. There cannot be even the slightest confusion between the struggle against Zionism and hostility to either Jews or Judaism. Zionism thrives on the fears that Jews have of another Holocaust. The Palestinian people are deeply appreciative of the firm support given them by progressive Jews, whether religious - as with Mrs Ruth Blau, Elmer Berger, Moshe Menuhin, or Israel Shahak - or atheist - as with Felicia Langer and Lea Tsemel and others on the left. Neither nationality nor theology nor social theory can, in any way, be allowed to become a stumbling block before the feet of those Jews, in Israel or elsewhere, who are determined to walk with the Palestinian people against injustice and racism. It can be said, with scientific certainty, that, without the unbreakable unity of Arab and Jewish progressives, victory over Zionism is not merely difficult, it is impossible.

Unless this book were to become an encyclopaedia, the material had necessarily to be selected, with all due care, so that a rounded picture might come forth. It is inevitable that the scholars of the several subjects dealt with will complain that not enough attention had been devoted to their particular specialties. And they will be correct, to be sure; whole books have been written on particular facets of the broader problems dealt with herein, and the reader is invited to delve further into the sources cited in the footnotes. An additional difficulty arises out of the fact that so much of the original material is in a host of languages that few readers are likely to know. Therefore, wherever possible, English sources and translations are cited, thus giving sceptical readers a genuine opportunity to verify the research apparatus relied upon.

**As readers are committed to discovering by reading this book, the consequences of Zionist ideology deserve study and exposure. That is what is attempted here. As an unabashed antiZionist, I clearly conclude that Zionism is wholly incorrect; but that is my conclusion drawn from the evidence. The conclusions are, in short, my own. As for the persuasiveness of the arguments used in arriving at them, readers are invited to judge for themselves.**

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## CHAPTER 1

### ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM PRIOR TO THE HOLOCAUST

From the French Revolution to the unification of Germany and Italy it appeared that the future foretold the continuing emancipation of Jewry in the wake of the further development of capitalism and its liberal and modernist values. Even the Russian pogroms of the 1880s could be seen as the last gasp of a dying feudal past, rather than a harbinger of things to come. Yet by 1896, when Theodor Herzl published his *Jewish State*, such an optimistic scenario could no longer be realistically envisioned. In 1895 he personally had seen the Parisian mob howling for the death of Dreyfus. That same year he heard the wild cheers of middleclass Vienna as they greeted the antiSemitic Karl Lueger after he had swept the election for *burgomeister*.

Born amidst a wave of defeats for the Jews, not only in backward Russia, but in the very centres of industrial Europe, modern Zionism's pretensions were the noblest conceivable: the redemption of the downtrodden Jewish people in their own land. But from the very beginning the movement represented the conviction of a portion of the Jewish middle class that the future belonged to the Jewhaters, that antiSemitism was inevitable, and natural. Firmly convinced that antiSemitism could not be beaten, the new World Zionist Organisation never fought it. Accommodation to antiSemitism - and pragmatic utilisation of it for the purpose of obtaining a Jewish state - became the central stratagems of the movement, and it remained loyal to its earliest conceptions down to and through the Holocaust. In June 1895, in his very first entry in his new Zionist Diary, Herzl laid down this fixed axiom of Zionism:

In Paris, as I have said, I achieved a freer attitude toward antiSemitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all, I recognized the emptiness and futility of trying to 'combat' antiSemitism. (1)

In the severest sense, Herzl was a man of his time and class; a monarchist who believed the best ruler '*un bon tyran*'. (2) His *Jewish State* baldly proclaimed: 'Nor are the presentday nations really fit for democracy, and I believe they will become ever less fit for it... I have no faith in the political virtue of our people, because we are no better than the rest of modern man. (3)

His universal pessimism caused him to misjudge totally the political environment of late-nineteenthcentury Western Europe. In particular, Herzl misunderstood the Dreyfus case .

The secrecy of the trial, and Dreyfus's soldierly insistence on his innocence, convinced many that an injustice was done. The case aroused a huge surge of Gentile support. Kings discussed it and feared for the sanity of France; Jews in remote hamlets in the Pripet Marches prayed for Emile Zola. The intellectuals of France rallied to Dreyfus's side. The socialist movement brought over the working people. The right wing of French society was discredited, the army stained, the Church disestablished. Anti-Semitism in France was driven into isolation lasting until Hitler's conquest. Yet Herzl, the most famous journalist in Vienna, did nothing to mobilise even one demonstration on behalf of Dreyfus. When he discussed the matter, it was always as a horrible example and never as a rallying cause. In 1899 the outcry compelled a retrial. A court martial affirmed the captain's guilt, 5 to 2, but found extenuating circumstances and reduced his sentence to ten years. But Herzl saw only defeat and depreciated the significance of the vast Gentile sympathy for the Jewish victim.

If a dumb beast were tortured in public, would not the crowd send up a cry of indignation? This is the meaning of the pro-Dreyfus sentiment in non-French countries, if indeed it is as widespread as many Jews estimate ... To put it in a nutshell, we might say that the injustice committed against Dreyfus is so great that we forget that we are dealing with a Jew ... is anyone presumptuous enough to claim that of any seven people two, or even one, favor the Jews? ... Dreyfus represents a bastion that has been and still is a point of struggle. Unless we are deceived, that bastion is lost! (4)

The French government understood realities better than Herzl and acted to head off further agitation by reducing the balance of the sentence. Given the success of the struggle for Dreyfus, French Jewry - right and left - saw Zionism as irrelevant. Herzl savaged them in his *Diary*: 'They seek protection from the Socialists and the destroyers of the present civil order ... Truly they are not Jews any more. To be sure, they are no Frenchmen either. They will probably become the leaders of European anarchism.' (5)

Herzl's first opportunity to develop his own pragmatic strategy of nonresistance to anti-Semitism, coupled with emigration of a portion of the Jews to a Jewish state in the making, came with Karl Lueger's success in Vienna. The demagogue's victory there was the first major triumph of the new wave of specifically anti-Semitic parties in Europe, but the Habsburgs strenuously opposed the new mayor-elect. Some 8 per cent of their generals were Jews. Jews were conspicuous as regime loyalists amidst the sea of irredentist nationalities tearing the Austro-Hungarian Empire apart. Anti-Semitism could only cause problems for the already weak dynasty. Twice the Emperor refused to confirm Lueger in office. Herzl was one of the few Jews in Vienna who favoured confirmation. Rather than attempting to organise opposition to the Christian Social demagogue, he met the Prime Minister, Count Casimir Badeni, on 3 November 1895 and told him 'boldly' to accommodate Lueger:

I think that Lueger's election as Mayor must be accepted. If you fail to do it the first time, then you will not be able to confirm on any subsequent occasion, and if you fail to accede the third time the dragoons will have to ride. The Count smiled: 'So!' - with a *gouenard* [scoffing] expression. (6)

It was poverty in the Habsburgs' Galicia, as well as discrimination in Russia, that was driving Jews into Vienna and further into Western Europe and America. They brought anti-

Semitism with them in their luggage. The new immigrants became a 'problem' to the rulers of the host societies, and to the already established local Jewries, who feared the rise of native anti-Semitism. Herzl had a readymade answer to the immigrant wave that he thought would please both the upper class of the indigenous Jews and the ruling class of Western capitalism: he would oblige them by taking the poor Jews off their hands. He wrote to Badeni: 'What I propose is ... not in any sense the emigration of all the Jews ... Through the door which I am trying to push open for the poor masses of Jews a Christian statesman who rightly seizes the idea, will step forward into worldhistory.' (7)

His first efforts at diverting the wind of opposition to Jewish immigration into Zionism's sails utterly failed, but that did not prevent him from trying again. In 1902 the British Parliament debated an Aliens Exclusion Bill aimed at the migrants, and Herzl travelled to London to testify on the Bill. Rather than pass it, he argued, the British government should support Zionism. He met Lord Rothschild but, in spite of all his public talk about the rejuvenation of Jewry, he dispensed with such cant in private conversation, telling Rothschild that he 'would incidentally be one of those wicked persons to whom English Jews might well erect a monument because I saved them from an influx of East European Jews, and also perhaps from anti-Semitism'. (8)

In his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, written in 1949, Chaim Weizmann - then the first President of the new Israeli state - looked back at the controversy over the Aliens Bill. An immigrant to Britain himself, the brilliant young chemist was already, in 1902, one of the leading intellectuals of the new Zionist movement. He had met Sir William Evans Gordon, author of the anti-Jewish legislation; even with hindsight, with the Holocaust fresh in his mind, the then President of Israel still insisted that:

our people were rather hard on him [Evans Gordon] . The Aliens Bill in England, and the movement which grew up around it were natural phenomena ... Whenever the quantity of Jews in any country reaches the saturation point, that country reacts against them ... The fact that the actual number of Jews in England, and even their proportion to the total population, was smaller than in other countries was irrelevant; the determining factor in this matter is not the solubility of the Jews, but the solvent power of the country ... this cannot be looked upon as anti-Semitism in the ordinary or vulgar sense of that word; it is a universal social and economic concomitant of Jewish immigration, and we cannot shake it off ... though my views on immigration naturally were in sharp conflict with his, we discussed these problems in a quite objective and even friendly way. (9)

For all his talk about sharp conflict with Evans Gordon, there is no sign that Weizmann ever tried to mobilise the public against him. What did Weizmann say to him in their 'friendly' discussion? Neither chose to tell us, but we can legitimately surmise: as with the master Herzl, so with his disciple Weizmann. We can reasonably conjecture that the avowed devotee of pragmatic accommodation asked the anti-Semite for his support of Zionism. Never once, then or in the future, did Weizmann ever try to rally the Jewish masses against anti-Semitism.

**'Taking the Jews away from the Revolutionary Parties'**

Herzl had originally hoped to convince the Sultan of Turkey to grant him Palestine as an autonomous statelet in return for the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) taking up the Turkish Empire's foreign debts. It soon became quite apparent that his hopes were unreal. Abdul Hamid knew well enough that autonomy always led to independence, and he was determined to hold on to the rest of his empire. The WZO had no army, it could never seize the country on its own. Its only chance lay in getting a European power to pressure the Sultan on Zionism's behalf. A Zionist colony would then be under the power's protection and the Zionists would be its agents within the decomposing Ottoman realm. For the rest of his life Herzl worked towards this goal, and he turned, first, to Germany. Of course, the Kaiser was far from a Nazi; he never dreamt of killing Jews, and he permitted them complete economic freedom, but nevertheless he froze them totally out of the officer corps and foreign office and there was severe discrimination throughout the civil service. By the end of the 1890s Kaiser Wilhelm became seriously concerned about the ever growing socialist movement, and Zionism attracted him as he was convinced the Jews were behind his enemies. He naively believed that 'the Social Democratic elements will stream into Palestine'. (10) He gave Herzl an audience in Constantinople on 19 October 1898. At this meeting the Zionist leader asked for his personal intervention with the Sultan and the formation of a chartered company under German protection. A sphere of influence in Palestine had attractions enough, but Herzl had grasped that he had another bait that he could dangle before potential rightwing patrons: 'I explained that we were taking the Jews away from the revolutionary parties.' (11)

In spite of the Kaiser's deep interest in getting rid of the Jews, nothing could be done through Berlin. His diplomats always knew the Sultan would never agree to the scheme. In addition, the German Foreign Minister was not as foolish as his master. He knew Germany's Jews would never voluntarily leave their homeland.

Herzl looked elsewhere, even turning to the tsarist regime for support. In Russia Zionism had first been tolerated; emigration was what was wanted. For a time Sergei Zubatov, chief of the Moscow detective bureau, had developed a strategy of secretly dividing the Tsar's opponents. Because of their double oppression, the Jewish workers had produced Russia's first mass socialist organisation, the General Jewish Workers League, the *Bund*. Zubatov instructed his Jewish agents to mobilise groups of the new *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) to oppose the revolutionaries. (12) (Zionism is not a monolithic movement, and almost from the beginning the WZO has been divided into officially recognised factions. For a list of the Zionist and Jewish organisations found herein, see pp. ix-xii.) But when elements within the Zionist ranks responded to the pressures of the repressive regime and the rising discontent, and began to concern themselves about Jewish rights in Russia, the Zionist bank - the Jewish Colonial Trust - was banned. This brought Herzl to St Petersburg for meetings with Count Sergei Witte, the Finance Minister, and Vyacheslav von Plevhe, the Minister of the Interior. It was von Plevhe who had organised the first pogrom in twenty years, at Kishenev in Bessarabia on Easter 1903. Fortyfive people died and over a thousand were injured; Kishenev produced dread and rage among Jews.

Herzl's parley with the murderous von Plevhe was opposed even by most Zionists. He went

to Petersburg to get the Colonial Trust reopened, to ask that Jewish taxes be used to subsidise emigration and for intercession with the Turks. As a sweetener for his Jewish critics, he pleaded, not for the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, the western provinces where the Jews were confined, but for its enlargement 'to demonstrate clearly the humane character of these steps', he suggested. (13) 'This would,, he urged, 'put an end to certain agitation.' (14) Von Plevhe met him on 8 August and again on 13 August. The events are known from Herzl's *Diary*. Von Plevhe explained his concern about the new direction he saw Zionism taking:

Lately the situation has grown even worse because the Jews have been joining the revolutionary parties. We used to be sympathetic to your Zionist movement, as long as it worked toward emigration. You do not have to justify the movement to me. *Vous prêchez a un converti* [You are preaching to a convert] . But ever since the Minsk conference we have noticed *un changement des gros bonnets* [ a change of bigwigs] . There is less talk now of Palestinian Zionism than there is about culture, organisation and Jewish nationalism. This does not suit us. (15)

Herzl did get the Colonial Trust reopened and a letter of endorsement for Zionism from von Plevhe, but the support was given solely on the proviso that the movement confine itself to emigration and avoid taking up national rights inside Russia. In return Herzl sent von Plevhe a copy of a letter to Lord Rothschild suggesting that: 'It would substantially contribute to the further improvement of the situation if the proJewish papers stopped using such an odious tone toward Russia. We ought to try to work toward that end in the near future.' (16) Herzl then spoke publicly, in Russia, against attempts to organise socialist groupings within Russian Zionism:

In Palestine ... our land, such a party would vitalise our political life - and then I shall determine my own attitude toward it. You do me an injustice if you say that I am opposed to progressive social ideas. But, now, in our present condition, it is too soon to deal with such matters. They are extraneous. Zionism demands complete, not partial involvement. (17)

Back in the West, Herzl went even further in his collaboration with tsarism. That summer, during the World Zionist Congress in Basle, he had a secret meeting with Chaim Zhitlovsky, then a leading figure in the Social Revolutionary Party. (World Zionist Congresses are held every two years, in odd years; the 1903 Congress was the sixth.) Later Zhitlovsky wrote of this extraordinary conversation. The Zionist told him that:

I have just come from Plevhe. I have his positive, binding promise that in 15 years, at the maximum, he will effectuate for us a charter for Palestine. But this is tied to one condition: the Jewish revolutionaries shall cease their struggle against the Russian government. If in 15 years from the time of the agreement Plevhe does not effectuate the charter, they become free again to do what they consider necessary. (18)

Naturally Zhitlovsky scornfully rejected the proposition. The Jewish revolutionaries were not about to call off the struggle for elementary human rights in return for a vague promise of a Zionist state in the distant future. The Russian naturally had a few choice words to say

about the founder of the WZO:

[He] was, in general, too 'loyal, to the ruling authorities - as is proper for a diplomat who has to deal with the powerthatbe - for him ever to be interested in revolutionists and involve them in his calculations ... He made the journey, of course, not in order to intercede for the people of Israel and to awaken compassion for us in Plevhe's heart. He traveled as a politician who does not concern himself with sentiments, but *interests* ... Herzl's 'politics' is built on pure diplomacy, which seriously believes that the political history of humanity is made by a few people, a few leaders, and that what they arrange among themselves becomes the content of political history. (19)

Was there any justification for Herzl's meetings with von Plevhe? There can be only one opinion. Even Weizmann was later to write that 'the step was not only humiliating, but utterly pointless ... unreality could go no further'. (20) The Tsar had not the slightest influence with the Turks, who saw him as their enemy. At the same time, in 1903, Herzl accepted an even more surreal proposition from Britain for a Zionist colony in the Kenya Highlands as a substitute for Palestine. Russian Zionists began to object to these bizarre discussions, and they threatened to leave the WZO, if 'Uganda' was even considered. Herzl had a vision of himself as a Jewish Cecil Rhodes; it hardly mattered to him where his colony was to be situated, but to most Russian Zionists the movement was an extension of their biblical heritage and Africa meant nothing to them. A deranged Russian Zionist tried to assassinate Herzl's lieutenant, Max Nordau, and only Herzl's premature death prevented an internal collapse of the movement.

However, direct contacts with tsarism did not stop with Herzl. By 1908 the ranks were willing to allow Herzl's successor, David Wolffsohn, to meet the Prime Minister, Piotr Stolypin, and Foreign Minister Alexandr Izvolsky, over renewed harassment of the Colonial Trust bank. Izvolsky quickly came to terms on the minimal request and indeed had a friendly discussion with the WZO's leader: 'I might almost say that I made a Zionist of him,' wrote Wolffsohn triumphantly. (21) But, needless to say, Wolffsohn's visit led to no changes in Russia's antiJewish legislation.

### **The First World War**

Zionism's egregious diplomatic record in the prewar period did not stop the WZO from trying to take advantage of the debacle of the First World War. Most Zionists were pro-German out of aversion to tsarism as the most antiSemitic of the contending forces . The WZO's headquarters in Berlin tried to get Germany and Turkey to support Zionism in Palestine as a propaganda ploy to rally world Jewry to their side. Others saw that Turkey was weak and certain to be dismembered in the war. They argued that, if they backed the Allies, Zionism might be set up in Palestine as a reward. To these, it hardly mattered that the Jews of Russia, that is the majority of world Jewry, stood to gain nothing by the victory of their oppressor and his foreign allies. Weizmann, domiciled in London, sought to win over the British politicians. He had already made contact with Arthur Balfour, who, as Prime Minister, had spoken against Jewish immigration, in 1905. Weizmann knew the full extent of Balfour's antisemitism, as he had unburdened himself of his philosophy to the



Zionist on ] 2 December 1914. In a private letter, Weizmann wrote: 'He told me how he had once had a long talk with Cosima Wagner at Bayreuth and that he shared many of her anti-Semitic postulates.' (22)

While Weizmann intrigued with the politicians in London, Vladimir Jabotinsky had obtained tsarist support for a volunteer Jewish Legion to help Britain take Palestine. There were thousands of young Jews in Britain, still Russian citizens, who were threatened with deportation to tsarist Russia by Herbert Samuel, the Jewish Home Secretary, if they did not 'volunteer' for the British Army. They were not intimidated; they would fight neither for the Tsar nor his ally, and the government backed down. The legion idea was a way out for the embarrassed Allies.

The Turks helped make the scheme into a reality by expelling all Russian Jews from Palestine as enemy aliens. They were also unwilling to fight directly for tsarism, but their Zionism led them to follow Jabotinsky's cothinker Yosef Trumpeldor into a Zion Mule Corps with the British at Gallipoli. Later Jabotinsky proudly boasted of how the Mule Corps - and the aid of the anti-Semites in Petersburg - helped him to obtain his goal:

it was that 'donkey battalion' from Alexandria, ridiculed by all the wits in Israel, which opened before me the doors of the government offices of Whitehall. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in St Petersburg wrote about it to Count Benkendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London; the Russian Embassy forwarded reports on it to the British Foreign Office; the (chief Counsellor of the Embassy, the late Constantine Nabokov, who afterward succeeded the Ambassador, arranged for the meetings with British ministers. (23)

### **The Balfour Declaration and the Fight against Bolshevism**

The end of the war saw both Jewry and Zionism in a totally new world. The WZO's manoeuvres had finally paid off - for Zionism, but not for Jewry. The Balfour Declaration was the price that London was prepared to pay to have American Jewry use its influence to bring the United States into the war, and to keep Russian Jewry loyal to the Allies. But although the declaration gave Zionism the military and political backing of the British Empire, it had not the slightest effect on the course of events in the former Tsarist Empire, the heartland of Jewry. Bolshevism, an ideology principally opposed to Zionism, had seized power in Petersburg and was being challenged by White Guard tsarists and Ukrainian, Polish and Baltic forces financed by Britain, the United States, France and Japan. The counterrevolution consisted of many elements which had a long tradition of anti-Semitism and pogroms. This continued, and even developed further, during the civil war and at least 60,000 Jews were killed by the anti-Bolshevik forces. Although the Balfour Declaration gave Zionism the lukewarm support of the backers of the White Guardist pogromists, it did nothing to curb the pogroms. The declaration was, at best, a vague pledge to allow the WZO to try to build a national home in Palestine. The content of that commitment was as yet completely undefined. The WZO's leaders understood that the British government saw the crushing of the Bolsheviks as its top priority, and that they had to be on their best behaviour, not merely in terms of insignificant Palestine, but in their activities in the volatile East European arena.

Western historians call the Bolshevik revolution the Russian Revolution, but the Bolsheviks themselves regarded it as triggering a worldwide revolt. So also did the capitalists of Britain, France and America, who saw the Communist success galvanising the left wing of their own working classes. Like all social orders that cannot admit the fact that the masses have justification to revolt, they sought to explain the upheavals, to themselves as well as the people, in terms of a conspiracy - of the Jews. On 8 February 1920, Winston Churchill, then the Secretary for War, told readers of the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* about 'Trotsky ... [and] ... his schemes of a worldwide communistic state under Jewish domination'. However, Churchill had his chosen Jewish opponents of Bolshevism - the Zionists. He wrote hotly of 'the fury with which Trotsky has attacked the Zionists generally, and Dr Weizmann in particular. 'Trotsky,' Churchill declared, was 'directly thwarted and hindered by this new ideal ... The struggle which is now beginning between the Zionist and Bolshevik Jews is little less than a struggle for the soul of the Jewish people.' (24)

The British strategy of using both antiSemites and Zionists against 'Trotsky' rested ultimately on Zionism's willingness to cooperate with Britain in spite of the British involvement with the White Russian pogromists. The WZO did not want pogroms in Eastern Europe, but it did nothing to mobilise world Jewry on behalf of the Jews beleaguered there. Weizmann's statements at the time, as well as his memoirs, tell us how they saw the situation. He appeared at the Versailles Conference on 23 February 1919. Once again he enunciated the traditional line on Jewry shared by both antiSemites and Zionists. It was not the Jews who really had problems, it was the Jews who were the problem:

Jewry and Judaism were in a frightfully weakened condition, presenting, to themselves and to the nations, a problem very difficult of solution. There was, I said, no hope at all of such a solution - since the Jewish problem revolved fundamentally round the homelessness of the Jewish people - without the creation of a National Home. (25)

The Jews, of course, presented no real problem - neither to the nations nor to 'themselves' - but Weizmann had a solution to the nonexistent 'problem'. Once again Zionism offered itself to the assembled capitalist powers as an antirevolutionary movement. Zionism would 'transform Jewish energy into a constructive force instead of its being dissipated in destructive tendencies'. (26) Even in his later years Weizmann could still only see the Jewish tragedy during the Russian Revolution through the Zionist end of the telescope:

Between the Balfour Declaration and the accession of the Bolsheviks to power, Russian Jewry had subscribed the then enormous sum of 30 million rubles for an agricultural bank in Palestine; but this, with much else, had now to be written off ... Polish Jewry ... was still suffering so much in the separate RussoPolish War, that it was incapable of making any appreciable contribution to the tasks which lay ahead of us. (27)

Weizmann saw Zionism as weak in all respects with only a toehold in Palestine. Eastern Europe was 'a tragedy which the Zionist movement was at the moment powerless to

relieve'. (28) Others were not so torpid. The British trade unions organised an embargo of arms shipments to the Whites. French Communists staged a mutiny in the French Black Sea fleet. And, of course, it was the Red Army that tried to protect the Jews against their White murderers. But the WZO never Used its influence, either in the AngloJewish community or in the seats of power, to back up the militant unionists. Weizmann completely shared the antiCommunist mentality of his British patrons. He never changed his opinion on the period. Even in *Trial and Error*, he still sounded like a high Tory writing of 'a time when the horrors of the Bolshevik revolution were fresh in everyone's mind' (my emphasis). (29)

### **The Minority Treaties at the Versailles Peace Conference**

Russia was out of control, but the Allies and their local clients still dominated the rest of Eastern Europe; now that the WZO had been converted by the Balfour Declaration into an official Voice of Israel, it could no longer remain taciturn about the fate of the huge Jewish communities there. It had to act as their spokesman. What it wanted was for the Jews to be recognised as a nation with autonomy for its separate schools and language institutions, as well as for the Jewish sabbath to be recognised as their day of rest. Since reliance on imperialism was the backbone of Zionist strategy, the *Comite des Delegations Juives* essentially the WZO in tandem with the American Jewish Committee - presented a memorandum on national autonomy to the Versailles Conference. All the new successor states to the fallen empires, but neither Germany nor Russia, were to be compelled to sign minorityrights treaties as a precondition of diplomatic recognition. At first the idea was taken up by the Allies, who realised that minority rights were essential if the tangled national chauvinists of Eastern Europe were not to tear each other to pieces and pave the way for a Bolshevik takeover. One by one the Poles, the Hungarians and the Romanians signed, but their signatures were meaningless. The rapidly growing Christian middle classes in these countries saw the Jews as their entrenched competitors and were determined to dislodge them. The Pole who signed their treaty was the country's most notorious antiSemite, the Hungarians declared their treaty day a day of national mourning and the Romanians refused to sign until the clauses guaranteeing sabbath rights and Jewish schools were deleted from their treaty.

There never was the slightest chance of success for the utopian plan. Balfour soon realised what problems the treaties would create for the Allies in Eastern Europe. On 22 October, he told the League of Nations that the accusing states would be assuming a thankless duty if they attempted to enforce the treaty obligations. He then argued that since the treaties preceded the League, it should not obligate itself to enforce them. (30) The assembled lawyers then accepted legal responsibility for the treaties, but provided no enforcement machinery.

Jews could not be bothered to use the meaningless treaties. Only three collective petitions were ever sent in. In the 1920s Hungary was found to have a *numerus clausus* in its universities. In 1933 the still weak Hitler felt compelled to honour the GermanPolish Minority Convention, which was the only such treaty applicable to Germany, and 10,000 Jews in Upper Silesia retained all civil rights until treaty term in July 1937. (31) Romania

was found guilty of revoking Jewish citizen rights in 1937. Such petty legalistic victories changed nothing in the long run.

The only way the Jews could have had any success in fighting for their rights in Eastern Europe was in alliance with the workingclass movements which, in all these countries, saw antiSemitism for what it was: an ideological razor in the hands of their own capitalist enemies. But although social revolution meant equality for the Jews as Jews, it also meant the expropriation of the Jewish middle class as capitalists. That was unacceptable to the local affiliates of the WZO, who were largely middle class in composition with virtually no workingclass following. The world Zionist movement, always concerned for British ruling-class opinion, never pushed its local groupings in the direction of the left, although the radicals were the only mass force on the ground that was prepared to defend the Jews. Instead, the WZO leaders concluded that they lacked the strength to struggle simultaneously for Jewish rights in the Diaspora and build the new Zion' and by the 1920s they abandoned all pretence of action on behalf of Diaspora Jewry *in situ*, leaving their local affiliates - and the Jewish communities in these countries - to fend for themselves.

### **The Zionist Alliance with AntiSemitism in Eastern Europe**

Most of the Jews in Eastern Europe did not see the Bolsheviks as the ogres that Churchill and Weizmann believed them to be. Under Lenin the Bolsheviks not only gave the Jews complete equality, but they even set up schools and, ultimately, courts in Yiddish; however, they were absolutely opposed to Zionism and all ideological nationalism. The Bolsheviks taught that the revolution required the unity of the workers of all nations against the capitalists. The nationalists separated 'their' workers from their class fellows. Bolshevism specifically opposed Zionism as proBritish and as fundamentally antiArab. The local Zionist leadership was therefore forced to turn to the nationalists as possible allies. In the Ukraine that meant Simon Petliura's *Rada* (Council), which, like the Zionists, recruited on strictly ethnic lines: no Russians, no Poles and no Jews.

### ***Ukrainia***

The *Rada* was based on village schoolteachers and other language enthusiasts, steeped in the 'glorious' history of the Ukraine - that is Bogdan Zinovy Chmielnicki's seventeenth-century Cossack revolt against Poland, during which the enraged peasantry massacred 100,000 Jews whom they saw as middlemen working for the Polish *Pans* (nobles). Nationalist ideology reinforced the 'Christkiller' venom which was poured into the illiterate rural masses by the old regime. antiSemitic outbreaks were inevitable in such an ideological climate, but the Zionists were taken in by promises of national autonomy, and rushed into the *Rada*. In January 1919 Abraham Revusky of the Poale Zion took office as Petliura's Minister for Jewish Affairs. (32) Meir Grossmann of the Ukrainian Zionist Executive went abroad to rally Jewish support for the antiBolshevik regime. (33)

The inevitable pogroms started with the first Ukrainian defeat at the hands of the Red Army in January 1919, and Revusky was compelled to resign within a month when Petliura did nothing to stop the atrocities. In many respects the Petliura episode destroyed the mass

base of Zionism amongst Soviet Jews. Churchill lost his gamble: Trotsky, not Weizmann and not Revusky, was to win the soul of the Jewish masses.

### ***Lithuania***

Lithuanian Zionist involvement with the antiSemites was likewise a failure, although, fortunately, Lithuania did not generate significant pogroms. The nationalists there were in an extremely weak position. Not only did they face a threat from Communism, they also had to struggle against Poland in a dispute over the territory around Vilna. They felt compelled to work with the Zionists, as they needed the support of the considerable Jewish minority in Vilna, and they also overestimated Zionist influence with the Allied powers whose diplomatic assent was a requirement if they were ever to gain the city. In December 1918 three Zionists entered the provisional government of Lithuania as Smetona and Augustinas Voldemaras. Jacob Wigodski became Minister for Jewish Affairs, N. Rachmilovitch became ViceMinister for Trade and Shimshon Rosenbaum was appointed ViceMinister for Foreign Affairs.

The bait again was autonomy. Jews would be given proportional representation in government, full rights for Yiddish, and a Jewish National Council would be given the right of compulsory taxation of all Jews for religious and cultural affairs. Nonpayment of tax would only be allowed for converts. Max Soloveitchik, who succeeded Wigodski at the Jewish Ministry, enthused that 'Lithuania is the creative source of the future forms of Jewish living'. (34)

By April 1922 the Lithuanian government felt it could begin to move against the Jews. The Vilna Corridor was definitely lost to Poland and the Polish Army stood between Communism and the Lithuanian border. Smetona's first move was to refuse to guarantee the institutions of autonomy in the constitution. Soloveitchik resigned in protest, and went to join the WZO Executive in London. The local Zionists tried to deal with the problem by forming an electoral bloc with the Polish, German and Russian minorities. This little extra muscle made the government slow its pace, and Rosenbaum was given the Jewish Ministry by Ernestas Galvanauskas, the new Prime Minister. By 1923 the onslaught began again with parliamentary speeches in Yiddish being forbidden. By June 1924 the Jewish Ministry was abolished; by July Yiddish store signs were outlawed; in September the police scattered the National Council, and Rosenbaum and Rachmilovitch moved to Palestine. By 1926 Smetona had set up a semiFascist regime which lasted until the Second World War takeover by Stalin. In later days Voldemaras and Galvanauskas openly assumed the role of Nazi agents in Lithuanian politics.

### **Zionist Accommodation with AntiSemitism**

The essentials of Zionist doctrine on antiSemitism were laid down well before the Holocaust: antiSemitism was inevitable and could not be fought; the solution was the emigration of unwanted Jews to a Jewish state in the making. The inability of the Zionist movement to take Palestine militarily compelled it to look for imperial patronage, which it expected to be motivated by antiSemitism to some degree. Zionists additionally saw

revolutionary Marxism as an assimilationist enemy which persuaded them to ally against it with their fellow separatists of the anti-Semitic rightwing nationalist movements in Eastern Europe.

Herzl and his successors were proven correct. It was an anti-Semite, Balfour, who enabled Zionism to entrench itself in Palestine. Although Israel was ultimately established through armed revolt against Britain, if it had not been for the presence of the British Army during the early years of the Mandate, the Palestinians would not have had the slightest problem pushing Zionism out.

But we are victims here of a sleight-of-hand trick. Balfour did give Zionism its toehold in Palestine, but did the British Mandate protect the Jews against their enemies in Europe?

Anti-Semitism could always be fought. It was not only fought, it was defeated in France, Russia and the Ukraine without any help from the World Zionist Organisation. Had the people of those countries followed the dictates of the Zionists, the anti-Semites would never have been defeated.

The policies of the early WZO were continued, in all essentials, by Chaim Weizmann, the main leader of the organisation during the Hitler epoch. Those elements in the WZO who wanted to make a stand against Nazism in the 1930s always found their main internal enemy in the President of their own movement. Nahum Goldmann, himself to become a post-Holocaust President of the WZO, later described in a speech the fierce arguments on the subject between Weizmann and Rabbi Stephen Wise, a leading figure in American Zionism:

I remember very violent discussions between him and Weizmann, who was a very great leader in his own right, but who rejected every interest in other things. He did take an interest in saving German Jews in the period of the first years of Nazism but World Jewish Congress, fight for Jewish rights, not that he denied their need, but he could not spare the time from his Zionist work. Stephen Wise argued with him 'but it is part and parcel of the same problem. If you lose the Jewish Diaspora you will not have a Palestine and you can only deal with the totality of Jewish life. (35)

Such was Zionism, and such its leading figure, when Adolf Hitler strode on to the stage of history.

### Notes

1. Marvin Lowenthal (ed.), *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p. 6.
2. Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, p. 141.
3. Ludwig Lewisohn (ed.), *Theodor Herzl: A Portrait*, pp. 2934.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 21920.

5. Raphael Patai (ed.), *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol. II, pp. 6723.
6. Lowenthal, *Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p. 71.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
9. Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp. 901.
10. David Yisraeli, 'Germany and Zionism' *Germany and the Middle East, 1835-1939* (Tel Aviv University, 1975), p. 142.
11. Patai, *Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol. III, p. 729.
12. George Gapon, *The Story of My Life*, p. 94.
13. Patai, *Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol. IV, p. 15 21.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 1525.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1538.
17. Amos Elon, *Herzl*, pp. 3812.
18. Samuel Portnoy (ed.), *Vladimir Medem The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist*, pp. 2958.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 82.
21. Emil Cohen, *David Wolffsohn*, p. 196.
22. Meyer Weisgal (ed.), *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Letters*, vol. VII p. 81. After the Holocaust Weizmann could not reveal the anti-Semitism of Zionism's great patron. He changed the record in *Trial and Error*: 'Mr Balfour mentioned that, two years before, he had been in Bayreuth, and that he had talked with Frau Cosima Wagner, the widow of the composer, who had raised the subject of the Jews. I interrupted Mr Balfour ...' (p. 153).
23. Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Story of the Jewish Legion*, p. 74.
24. Winston Churchill, 'Zionism versus Bolshevism', *Illustrated Sunday Herald* (8

February 1920), p. 5.

25 Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 243.

26 Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, p. 348.

27. Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp. 2401.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

30. Jacob Robinson et al., *Were the Minority Treaties a Failure?*, pp. 7980.

31. Jacob Robinson, *And the Crooked shall be made Straight*, p. 72.

32. 'Abraham Revusky', *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 14, col. 134.

33. 'Meir Grossmann', *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7, col. 938.

34. Samuel Gringauz, 'Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania (1918-1925)', *Jewish Social Studies* (July 1952), p. 237.

35. Nahum Goldmann, 'Dr Stephen S. Wise', *A Galaxy of American Zionist Rishonim*, pp. 1718.

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## CHAPTER 2

### **BLUT UND BODEN (BLOOD AND SOIL) : THE ROOTS OF ZIONIST RACISM**

It was anti-Semitism - alone - that generated Zionism. Herzl could not ground his movement in anything positively Jewish. Although he sought the support of the rabbis, he personally was not devout. He had no special concern for Palestine, the ancient homeland ; he was quite eager to accept the Kenya Highlands, at least on a temporary basis. He had no interest in Hebrew ; he saw his Jewish state as a linguistic Switzerland. He had to think of race, for it was in the air ; the Teutonic anti-Semites were talking of the Jews as a race, but he soon discarded the doctrine, and gave a paradoxical discussion with Israel Zangwill, one of his earliest adherents, as the instance for his rejection. He portrayed the Anglo-Jewish writer as :

of the long-nosed Negro type, with woolly deep-black hair... He maintains, however, the racial point of view - something I can't accept, for I have merely to look at him and at myself. All I say is : we are an historical unit, one nation with anthropological diversities.(1)

Unconcerned with religion, he even proposed that an atheist, the then world-famous author, Max Nordau, should succeed him as the WZO's President. Again, the disciple was less



liberal than the master. Nordau was married to a Christian, and was afraid that his wife would be resented by the Orthodox among the ranks.(2) He was already married when he converted to Zionism and, despite his own Gentile wife, he soon became a confirmed Jewish racist. On 21 December 1903 he gave an interview to Eduard Drumont's rabid anti-Semitic newspaper, *La Libre Parole*, in which he said that Zionism wasn't a question of religion, but exclusively of race, and there is no one with whom I am in greater agreement on this point than M. Drumont'.(3)

Although only one national branch of the WZO (the Dutch Federation in 1913) ever went to the trouble of trying formally to exclude Jews living in mixed marriages, cosmopolitan Zionism died an early death with Herzl in 1904.4 The WZO as such never had to take a position against mixed marriage ; those who believed in it rarely thought to join the obviously unsympathetic Zionists. The movement in Eastern Europe, its mass base, shared the spontaneous folkreligious prejudices of the Orthodox communities around them. Although the ancient Jews had seen proselytising and marriages to Gentiles as adding to their strength, latter pressure from the Catholic Church caused the rabbis to begin to see converts as a 'troublesome itch' and they abandoned proselytising. With the centuries, self-segregation became the hallmark of the Jews. In time the masses came to see mixed marriage as treason to Orthodoxy. Although in the West some Jews modified the religion and formed 'Reform' sects and others abandoned the God of their forefathers, the traffic was essentially away from Judaism. Few joined the Jewish world either by conversion or marriage. If Western Zionism developed in a more secular atmosphere than that of Eastern Europe, the bulk of its members still saw mixed marriage as leading Jews away from the community rather than bringing new additions to it.

The German university graduates, who took over the Zionist movement after Herzl's death, developed the modernist racist ideology of Jewish separatism. They had been powerfully influenced by their panGermanic fellow students of the *Wandervogel* (wandering birds or free spirits) who dominated the German campuses before 1914. These chauvinists rejected the Jews as not being of Germanic *Blut* ; therefore they could never be part of the German volk and were thoroughly alien to the Teutonic *Boden* or soil. All Jewish students were compelled to grapple with these concepts which surrounded them. A few moved left and joined the Social Democrats. To them this was just more bourgeois nationalism and was to be fought as such. Most remained conventionally *Kaisertreu*, stout nationalists who insisted that a thousand years on the German boden had made them into 'Germans of the Mosaic persuasion'. But a portion of the Jewish students adopted the wandervogel ideology whole and simply translated it into Zionist terminology. They agreed with the antiSemites on several key points : the Jews were not part of the German volk and, of course, Jews and Germans should not mix sexually, not for the traditional religious reasons, but for the sake of their own unique blut. Not being of Teutonic *Blut*, they perforce had to have their own *Boden* : Palestine.

At first glance it would appear strange that middleclass Jewish students should be so influenced by anti-Semitic thought, especially as at the same time, socialism, with its assimilationist attitudes towards the Jews, was gaining considerable support in the society around them. However, socialism appealed primarily to the workers, not to the middle

class. In their environment chauvinism predominated ; although intellectually they repudiated their connection with the German people, in fact they never emancipated themselves from the German capitalist class, and throughout the First World War the German Zionists passionately supported their own government. For all their grandiose intellectual pretensions, their *voelkisch* Zionism was simply an imitation of German nationalist ideology. Thus the young philosopher Martin Buber was able to combine Zionism with ardent German patriotism during the First World War. In his book *Drei Reden ueber das Judentum*, published in 1911, Buber spoke of a youth who :

senses in this immortality of the generations a community of blood, which he feels to be the antecedents of his I, its perseverance in the infinite past. To that is added the discovery, promoted by this awareness, that blood is a deep rooted nurturing force within individual man ; that the deepest layers of our being are determined by blood ; that our innermost thinking and our will are colored by it. Now he finds that the world around him is the world of imprints and influences, whereas blood is the realm of a substance capable of being imprinted and influenced, a substance absorbing and assimilating all into its own form. Whoever, faced with the choice between environment and substance, decides for substance will henceforth have to be a Jew truly from within, to live as a Jew with all the contradiction, all the tragedy, and all the future promise of his blood.(5)

The Jews had been in Europe for millenniums, far longer than, say, the Magyars. No one would dream of referring to the Hungarians as Asiatics, yet, to Buber, the Jews of Europe were still Asians and presumably always would be. You could get the Jew out of Palestine, but you could never get Palestine out of the Jew. In 1916 he wrote that the Jew :

was driven out of his land and dispersed throughout the lands of the Occident yet, despite all this, he has remained an Oriental. One can detect all this in the most assimilated Jew, if one knows how to gain access to his soul... the immortal Jewish unitary drive - this will come into being only after the continuity of life in Palestine... Once it comes into contact with its maternal soil, it will once more become creative.(6)

However, Buber's *voelkisch* Zionism, with its assorted strands of mystical enthusiasm, was too spiritual to appeal to a wide following. What was needed was a popular Zionist version of the socialDarwinism which had swept the bourgeois intellectual world in the wake of Europe's imperial conquests in Africa and the East. The Zionist version of this notion was developed by the Austrian anthropologist Ignatz Zollschan. To him the secret value of Judaism was that it had, albeit inadvertently, worked to produce a wonder of wonders :

a nation of pure blood, not tainted by diseases of excess or immorality, of a highly developed sense of family purity, and of deeply rooted virtuous habits would develop an exceptional intellectual activity. Furthermore, the prohibition against mixed marriage provided that these highest ethnical treasures should not be lost, through the admixture of less carefully bred races... there resulted that natural selection which has no parallel in the history of the human race... If a race that is so highly gifted were to have the opportunity of again developing its original power, nothing could equal it as far as cultural value is concerned.(7)

Even Albert Einstein subscribed to the Zionist race conceptions and in so doing he reinforced racism, lending it the prestige of his reputation. His own contributions to the discussion sound suitably profound, but they are based on the same nonsense.

Nations with a racial difference appear to have instincts which work against their fusion. The assimilation of the Jews to the European nations... could not eradicate the feeling of lack of kinship between them and those among whom they lived. In the last resort, the instinctive feeling of lack of kinship is referable to the law of the conservation of energy. For this reason it cannot be eradicated by any amount of well meant pressure.(8)

Buber, Zollschan and Einstein were but three among the classic Zionists who pontificated learnedly on race purity. But for sheer fanaticism few could match the American Maurice Samuel. A wellknown writer in his day - later, in the 1940s, he was to work with Weizmann on the latter's autobiography - Samuel addressed the American public in 1927 in his *I, the Jew*. He denounced with horror a town which he readily conceded that he only knew by repute - and that the evidence would make us think was the freeliving artists' colony at Taos, New Mexico :

there came together into this small place, representatives of the African Negro, the American and Chinese Mongol, the Semite and the Aryan... free intermarriage had set in... Why does this picture, part actual, part fanciful, fill me with a strange loathing, suggest the obscene, the obscurely beastly?... Why then does that village which my fancy conjures up call to mind a heap of reptiles breeding uglily in a bucket ? (9)

### **"To be a Good Zionist one must be Somewhat of an AntiSemite"**

Although *Blut* was a recurrent theme in preHolocaust Zionist literature, it was not as central to its message as *Boden*. As long as America, s shores remained open, Europe's Jews asked : if antiSemitism could not be fought on its home ground, why should they not just follow the crowd to America ? The Zionist response was doublebarrelled : anti-Semitism would accompany the Jews wherever they went and, what was more, it was the Jews who had created antiSemitism by their own characteristics. The root cause of anti-Semitism, Zionists insisted, was the Jews' exile existence. Jews lived parasitically off their 'hosts'. There were virtually no Jewish peasants in the Diaspora. The Jews lived in cities, they were alienated from manual labour or, more bluntly, they shunned it and preoccupied themselves with intellectual or commercial concerns. At best, their claims of patriotism were hollow as they wandered eternally from country to country. And when they fancied themselves as socialists and internationalists, in reality they were still no more than the middlemen of the revolution, fighting 'other people's battles'. These tenets combined were known as *shelilat ha'galut* (the Negation of the Diaspora), and were held by the entire spectrum of Zionists who varied only on matters of detail. They were argued vigorously in the Zionist press, where the distinctive quality of many articles was their hostility to the entire Jewish people. Anyone reading these pieces without knowing their source would have automatically assumed that they came from the antiSemitic press. The *Weltanschauung* of the youth organisation *Hashomer Hatzair* (Young Watchmen), originally composed in 1917, but republished again as late as 1936, was typical of these

effusions :

The Jew is a caricature of a normal, natural human being, both physically and spiritually. As an individual in society he revolts and throws off the harness of social obligations, knows no order nor discipline. (10)

Similarly, in 1935 an American, Ben Frommer, a writer for the ultraright Zionist-Revisionists, could declare of no less than 16 million of his fellow Jews that :

The fact is undeniable that the Jews collectively are unhealthy and neurotic. Those professional Jews who, wounded to the quick, indignantly deny this truth are the greatest enemies of their race, for they thereby lead them to search for false solutions, or at most palliatives. (11)

This style of Jewish selfhatred permeated a great deal of Zionist writing. In 1934 Yehezkel Kaufman, then famous as a scholar of biblical history at Jerusalem's Hebrew University and himself a Zionist, though an opponent of the bizarre theory of the Negation of the Diaspora, aroused furious controversy by culling the Hebrew literature for yet worse examples. In Hebrew the ranters could really attack their fellow Jews without fear of being accused of providing ammunition for the Jewhaters. Kaufman's *Hurban Hanefesh* (Holocaust of the Soul) cited three of the classic Zionist thinkers. For Micah Yosef Berdichevsky the Jews were 'not a nation, not a people, not human'. To Yosef Chaim Brenner they were nothing more than 'Gypsies, filthy dogs, inhuman, wounded, dogs'. To A.D. Gordon his people were no better than 'parasites, people fundamentally useless.' (12)

Naturally Maurice Samuel had to apply his fine hand to concocting libels against his fellow Jews. In 1924, in his work *You Gentiles*, he fabricated a Jewry driven by its own sinister demiurge to oppose the Christian social order :

We Jews, we the destroyers, will remain the destroyers forever. NOTHING that you will do will meet our needs and demands. We will forever destroy because we need a world of our own, a Godworld, which is not your nature to build... those of us who fail to understand that truth will always be found in alliance with your rebellious factions, until disillusionment comes, the wretched fate which scattered us through your midst has thrust this unwelcome role upon us.(13)

Labour Zionism produced its own unique brand of Jewish selfhatred. In spite of its name and pretensions, Labour Zionism was never able to win over any significant section of the Jewish working class in any country of the Diaspora. Its members had a selfdefeating argument : they claimed that the Jewish workers were in 'marginal' industries, such as the needle trades, which were unessential to the economy of the 'host', nations, and therefore the Jewish workers would always be marginal to the workingclass movement in the countries of their abode. Jewish workers, it was claimed, could only wage a 'healthy' class struggle in their own land. Naturally poor Jews showed little interest in a so-called labour movement that did not tell them to put their all into fighting in the immediate present for better conditions, but rather to concern themselves about faroff Palestine. Paradoxically, Labour Zionism's primary appeal was to those young middleclass Jews who sought to break with their class origins, but were not prepared to go over to the workers of the

country of their habitation. Labour Zionism became a kind of counterculture sect, denouncing Jewish Marxists for their internationalism, and the Jewish middle class as parasitic exploiters of the 'host', nations. In effect they translated traditional anti-Semitism into Yiddish : the Jews were in the wrong countries in the wrong occupations and had the wrong politics. It took the Holocaust to bring these Jeremiahs to their senses. Only then did they appreciate the common voice in their own message and the Nazis' anti-Jewish propaganda. In March 1942 Chaim Greenberg, then the editor of New York's Labour Zionist organ, *Jewish Frontier*, painfully admitted that, indeed, there had been :

a time when it used to be fashionable for Zionist speakers (including the writer) to declare from the platform that 'To be a good Zionist one must be somewhat of an anti-Semite'. To this day Labor Zionist circles are under the influence of the idea that the Return to Zion involved a process of purification from our economic uncleanness. Whosoever doesn't engage in so-called 'productive' manual labor is believed to be a sinner against Israel and against mankind. (14)

### **'Grist to the Mills of Nazi Propaganda'**

If, without further facts, anyone were told that the early Zionists were racists, it would be automatic to assume this to be a part of the colonialist aspects of Zionism in Palestine. In reality this is not so ; *Blut* Zionism would have evolved even if Palestine were to have been completely empty. Enthusiasm for *Blut und Boden* were part of Zionism before the first modern Zionist ever left Europe.

Race Zionism was a curious offshoot of racial anti-Semitism. True, these Zionists argued, the Jews were a pure race, certainly purer than, say, the Germans who, as even the pan-Germans conceded, had a huge admixture of Slavic blood. But to these Zionists, even their racial purity could not overcome the one flaw in Jewish existence : they did not have their own Jewish *Boden*. If the Teutonic racists could see themselves as *uebermenschen* (supermen), these Hebrew racists did not see the Jews in that light ; rather, it was the reverse. They believed that because they lacked their own *boden* the Jews were *untermenschen* and therefore, for their 'hosts', little more than leeches : the world pest.

If one believes in the validity of racial exclusiveness, it is difficult to object to anyone else's racism. If one believes further that it is impossible for any people to be healthy except in their own homeland, then one cannot object to anyone else excluding 'aliens' from their territory. In fact the average Zionist never thought of himself as leaving civilised Europe for the wilds of Palestine. In life it is obvious that Zionist *blut und boden* provided an excellent rationale for not fighting anti-Semitism on its home ground. It was not the fault of the anti-Semites, it was because of the Jews' own misfortune of being in exile. The Zionists could tearfully argue that the loss of Palestine was the root cause of anti-Semitism and the regaining of Palestine was the only solution to the Jewish question. Everything else could only be palliative or futile.

Walter Laqueur, the doyen of Zionist historians, has asked in his book, *A History of Zionism*, if Zionist insistence on the naturalness of anti-Semitism was not just 'grist to the mill of Nazi propaganda'.(15) It certainly was. Laqueur's question can best be answered

with another question : is it difficult to understand the gullible reader of a Nazi newspaper, who concluded that what was said by the Nazis, and agreed to by the Zionists - Jews - had to be right ?

There would be worse : any Jewish movement that prattled on about the naturalness of antiSemitism would, just as 'naturally', seek to come to terms with the Nazis when they came to power.

## Notes

1. Marvin Lowenthal (ed.), *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, p. 78.
2. Amos Elon, *Herzl*, p. 255.
3. Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, p. 322.
4. The WZO is structured by national states, and elections are held on a national basis for the World Zionist Congress ; the various ideological tendencies which are worldwide in their structure, run in the various national elections for delegates.
5. Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, pp. 1519.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 757.
7. Ignatz Zollschan, *Jewish Questions* (1914) pp. 1718.
8. Solomon Goldman, *Crisis and Decision* (1938), p. 116.
9. Maurice Samuel, *I, the Jew*, pp. 2446.
10. 'Our Shomer "Weltanschauung"', *Hashomer Hatzair* (December 1936), p. 26.
11. Ben Frommer, 'The Significance of a Jewish State', *Jewish Call* (Shanghai, May 1935), p. 10.
12. Yehezkel Kaufman, 'Hurban Hanefesh : A Discussion of Zionism and AntiSemitism', *Issues* (Winter 1967), p. 106.
13. Maurice Samuel, *You Gentiles*, p. 155.
14. Chaim Greenberg, 'The Myth of Jewish Parasitism', *Jewish Frontiers* (March 1942), p. 20.
15. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, p. 500.

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## CHAPTER 3

## GERMAN ZIONISM AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

German Jewry was deeply loyal to the Weimar Republic which had put an end to the discriminations of the Wilhelmine era. Germany's Jews, (0.9 per cent of the population) were generally prosperous: 60 per cent were businessmen or professionals; the rest artisans, clerks, students, with only insubstantial numbers of industrial workers. Most were for liberal capitalism, with 64 per cent voting for the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP). About 28 per cent voted for the moderate *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD). Only 4 per cent voted for the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD), and the rest were scattered rightists. Weimar looked safe to all of them as they saw the Nazi vote drop from 6.5 per cent in 1924 to a mere 2.6 per cent in 1928. None thought horror lay ahead.

Until the late 1920s Hitler had wasted his time trying to recruit the working class into his National Socialist German Workers' Party, but few were interested: Hitler had been for the war, they had finally revolted against it; Hitler was against strikes, they were good trade unionists. When the Depression finally brought him a mass following it was the peasants, not the workers, who poured into his movement. Weimar had changed nothing for them; 27 per cent still tilled less than one hectare (2.471 acres), another 26 per cent worked less than 5 hectares (12.5 acres). In debt to the banks even before the crisis, these rural Christians were easily persuaded to focus on the Jews who, for centuries, had been identified with pawnbroking and usury. The Christian professional class, already steeped in sabre and beer volkism from their university days, and the small shopkeepers, resenting the superior competition from the large Jewish department stores, were the next to break away from the coalition that had ruled Weimar from its inception and join the Nazis. From a tiny 2.6 per cent in 1928 the Nazi vote soared to 18.3 per cent in the elections of 14 September 1930.

Religious Jewry turned to its traditional defence organisation, the *Centralverein*, the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith; now, for the first time, the departmentstore owners, who had become a prime target for the attentions of the Nazi brownshirts, began to contribute to the CV's efforts. The CV's elderly leadership could not understand the collapse of capitalism. They were simply stunned when their party, the DDP, suddenly jackknifed and turned itself into the moderately anti-Semitic *Staatspartei*. However, younger members of the CV pushed aside the old leadership and were able to get the CV to use the departmentstore money to subsidise the SPD's anti-Nazi propaganda. After the DDP's betrayal, the SPD picked up approximately 60 per cent of the Jewish vote. Only 8 per cent went Communist, and they received no CV largess for the stated grounds that they were militantly against God; the real concern was that they were equally militant against the CV's financial angles.

Each German Jewish association saw Hitler's ascent through its own special mirror. The young CV functionaries saw that the SPD's workingclass base stayed loyal to it and that Jews continued to be integrated into the party at every level. What they did not realise was that the SPD was incapable of defeating Hitler. Before the First World War the SPD had been the largest socialist party in the world, the pride of the Socialist International. But it was no more than reformist and throughout the Weimar Republic it failed to establish the firm socialist base which would have allowed the German working class to resist the Nazis. The onset of the Depression found their own Hermann Muller as Chancellor. Soon their

rightwing coalition partners decided the workers would have to bear the weight of the crisis and replaced him with Heinrich Brüning of the Catholic Zentrumspartei. The 'hunger chancellor', raised taxes on the lucky ones with jobs to pay ever smaller benefits to the increasing millions of unemployed. The SPD leaders knew this was suicide but 'tolerated' Brüning, fearing he would bring Hitler into his coalition if they turned away from him. Therefore they did not fight against the cuts in the dole. Brüning had nothing to offer the desperate middle class and more of them put on brown shirts. The SPD's ranks, Jews and non-Jews alike, passively stood by and watched as their party succumbed.

The Communist KPD also defeated itself. Lenin's Bolshevism had degenerated into Stalin's 'Third Period' ultraleftism, and Rosa Luxemburg's *Spartakusbund* into Ernst Thälmann's *Rote Front*. To these sectarians everyone else was a Fascist. The *Sozialdemokraten* were now '*Sozial Faschisten*' and no unity was possible with them.

In 1930 the two working class parties combined outpolled Hitler 37.6 per cent to 18.3 per cent. He could have been stopped; it was their failure to unite on a militant programme of joint physical defence against the brown shirts and in defence against the government's onslaught against the standard of living of the masses that let Hitler come to power. Since the Second World War Western scholars have tended to see the KPD 'betraying' the SPD through Stalin's fanaticism. In the Stalinist camp the roles are reversed; the SPD is blamed for leaning on a broken reed like Brüning. But both parties must share the responsibility for the debacle.

### **'It is Right, therefore, that They should Fight against Us'**

If the SPD and the KPD must bear their full measure of guilt for Hitler's triumph, so too must the Zionistische *Vereinigung fuer Deutschland* (the Zionist Federation of Germany). Although conventional wisdom has always assumed that the Zionists, with their dire view of anti-Semitism, warned the Jews of the Nazi menace, this is in fact not true. In 1969, Joachim Prinz, the former President of the American Jewish Congress - in his youth a fire-eating Zionist rabbi in Berlin - still insisted that:

Since the assassination of Walther Rathenau in 1922, there was no doubt in our minds that the German development would be toward an anti-Semitic totalitarian regime. When Hitler began to arouse, and as he put it 'awaken' the German nation to racial consciousness and racial superiority, we had no doubt that this man would sooner or later become the leader of the German nation.(1)

Yet a diligent search of the pages of the *Juedische Rundschau*, the weekly organ of the ZVfD, will not reveal such prophecies. When a Jew was killed and several hundred Jewish stores looted in a November 1923 hunger riot in Berlin, Kurt Blumenfeld, the Secretary (later President) of the ZVfD, consciously played down the incident:

There would be a very cheap and effective kind of reaction, and we ... decisively reject it. One could incite deep anxiety among German Jewry. One could use the excitement to enlist the vacillating. One could represent Palestine and Zionism as a refuge for the homeless. We do not wish to do that. We do not wish to carry off by



demagoguery those who have stood apart from Jewish life out of indifference. But we wish to make clear to them through [our] sincere conviction where the basic error of Jewish *galuth* [exile] existence lies. We wish to awaken their national self-awareness. We wish ... through patient and earnest educational work [to] prepare them to participate in the upbuilding of Palestine.(2)

The historian Stephen Poppel, certainly no enemy of the ZVfD, categorically states in his book, *Zionism in Germany 1897/1933*, that after 1923 the *Rundschau* 'did not begin to take systematic, detailed notice of antiJewish agitation and violence until 1931' (3) Far from warning and defending the Jews, prominent Zionists opposed antiNazi activity.

It had been the German Zionists who had most fully elaborated the ideology of the WZO before 1914 and in the 1920s they developed the argument to its logical conclusion: Judaism in the Diaspora was hopeless. There was no possible defence against antiSemitism and there was no purpose in trying to develop Jewish cultural and community institutions in Germany. The ZVfD turned away from the society in which they lived. There were only two Zionist tasks: instilling nationalist consciousness in as many Jews as would listen and training youths for occupations useful in the economic development of Palestine. Anything else was useless and palliative.

In 1925 the most vehement protagonist of total abstentionism, Jacob Klatzkin, the coeditor of the massive *Encyclopedia Judaica*, laid down the full implications of the Zionist approach to antiSemitism.

If we do not admit the rightfulness of antisemitism, we deny the rightfulness of our own nationalism. If our people is deserving and willing to live its own national life, then it is an alien body thrust into the nations among whom it lives, an alien body that insists on its own distinctive identity, reducing the domain of their life. It is right, therefore, that they should fight against us for their national integrity Instead of establishing societies for defense against the antisemites, who want to reduce our rights, we should establish societies for defense against our friends who desire to defend our rights.(4)

German Zionism was distinctive in the WZO, in that the ZVfD leaders opposed taking any part in local politics. To Blumenfeld, *Grenzüberschreitung* (overstepping the borders) was the dreaded sin. Blumenfeld completely accepted the antiSemitic line that Germany belonged to the Aryan race and that for a Jew to hold an office in the land of his birth was nothing more than an intrusion into the affairs of another volk. In theory the ZVfD insisted that every single one of its members should eventually emigrate to Palestine, but of course this was completely unrealistic. Some 2,000 settlers went from Germany to Palestine between 1897 and 1933, but many of these were Russians stranded there after the revolution. In 1930 the ZVfD had 9,059 paidup members, but the dues were nominal and in no way a sign of deep commitment . For all Blumenfeld's enthusiasm, Zionism was not an important element in the Weimar Republic.

When the warning signs of the Nazi surge appeared in the June 1930 elections in Saxony, where they obtained 14.4 per cent of the vote, the Berlin Jewish community put pressure on

the ZVfD to join a Reichstag Election Committee in conjunction with the CV and other assimilationists. But the ZVfD's adherence was strictly nominal; the assimilationists complained that the Zionists put barely any time or money into it, and it dissolved immediately after the election. A *Rundschau* article by Siegfried Moses, later Blumenfeld's successor as head of the federation, demonstrated the Zionists' indifference to the construction of a strenuous defence:

We have always believed the defense against anti-Semitism to be a task which concerns all Jews and have clearly stated the methods of which we approve and those which we consider irrelevant or ineffective. But it is true that the defense against anti-Semitism is not our main task, it does not concern us to the same extent and is not of the same importance for us as is the work for Palestine and, in a somewhat different sense, the work of the Jewish communities.(5)

Even after the election in September 1930 the Zionists argued against the notion of creating an effective front against the Nazis. A.W. Rom insisted in the *Rundschau* that *any* defence could only be a waste of time. To him 'The most important lesson we have learned from this election is that it is much more important to strengthen the Jewish community in Germany from within than to conduct an external fight.'(6)

The ZVfD leaders could never effectively unite with the assimilationists on defence work. They were total abstentionists politically, and they were volkists; they did not believe in the CV's fundamental premiss that the Jews were Germans. Their concern was that the Jews should emphasise their Jewishness. They reasoned that if Jews started to consider themselves a separate national minority, and stopped interfering in "Aryan" affairs, it would be possible to get the anti-Semites to tolerate them on a basis of a "dignified" coexistence. The assimilationists would have none of this; to them the Zionist position was just an echo of the Nazi line. There is no doubt that the assimilationists were correct. But even if the Zionists had convinced every Jew to support their stance, it would not have helped. Hitler did not care what the Jews thought of themselves; he wanted them out of Germany and, preferably, dead. The Zionist solution was no solution. There was nothing the Jews could have done to mollify anti-Semitism. Only the defeat of Nazism could have helped the Jews, and that could only have happened if they had united with the anti-Nazi working class on a programme of militant resistance. But this was anathema to the ZVfD leadership who, in 1932, when Hitler was gaining strength by the day, chose to organise anti-Communist meetings to warn Jewish youth against 'red assimilation'.(7)

### **The Zionist Minorities**

As Hitler rose to power, minorities within the ZVfD increasingly ignored Blumenfeld's strictures against political action and either worked with the CV or looked to the other political elements for their salvation. Georg Kareski, a banker, had long been in disagreement with Blumenfeld over the ZVfD President's basic indifference to internal Jewish community politics, and in 1919 he had established a *Juedische Volkspartei* to run in the Berlin Jewish community elections on a programme with greater emphasis on Jewish schooling. In 1930 Kareski surfaced in the larger German political arena as a candidate for the Reichstag on the Catholic Centre ticket (he lost) and an 'Organisation of Jewish Centre

Party Voters' was set up by his cothinkers. The spectacle amused a Social Democratic wag:

The homeless Jewish bourgeoisie has in great part sought shelter with the Center Party - Christ and the first Pope were Jews, so why not? Wretched individuals who do violence to their ideas and purposes out of anxiety over 'Socialist expropriation'. What Hitler is to the Christians, the Center Party is to the Jews.(8)

Bismark's *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church had made the German Catholic hierarchy very distrustful of anti-Semitism; they feared it would pave the way for further attacks on the Catholic minority as well. In addition, individual bishops, mindful that Jesus was a Jew and that therefore racial anti-Semitism was incompatible with Christianity, had even refused communion to Nazi members. But there had always been anti-Semites among the leaders of the Centre, and after the 1929 Lateran accord with Mussolini there was growing pressure from the Vatican for a Centre-Nazi accommodation in the name of a fight against Communism. However, Kareski could not see the direction in which class interest was pushing the Catholic upper class, and he completely misjudged Franz von Papen, who took over as a Centre Chancellor after Bruning. Kareski reassured his rich Jewish friends that 'the Papen government has written the protection of the Jews on the flag'.(9) In reality von Papen had always been an anti-Semite and in the end, after he had lost the chancellorship, he was part of the camarilla that convinced President Hindenburg to summon Hitler to power.

On the Zionist left the German branch of the Poale Zion backed the incompetent leadership of the SPD. Before 1914 the SPD refused to associate with Zionism, which it saw as separating the Jews from other workers, and only those elements on the far right of the SPD that supported German imperialism in Africa patronised the Labour Zionists, whom they saw as fellow socialist-colonisers. The Socialist International only established friendly relations with Poale Zion during and after the First World War, when the leftwing anti-colonialist forces joined the Communist International. The Labour Zionists joined the SPD with one central purpose: to gain support for Zionism. As long as the leaders of the SPD had good things to say about Zionism, they, in turn, replied with similar endearments. By 1931 the Labour Zionist leaders in Palestine began to envision a victorious Hitler, but they had no alternative stratagems for the SPD and there is no record of the Poale Zion leaders in Palestine ever publicly quarrelling with their erstwhile comrades in the SPD leadership.

### **'Germans of the Mosaic Faith are an Undesirable, Demoralizing Phenomena'**

The basic Zionist attitude toward the Nazis was that nothing could really be done to stop them, but they felt obliged to do something. The *Encyclopaedia of Zionism and Israel* tells us, very vaguely, that the German Zionists tried to persuade Chancellor Bruning to issue a strong declaration against Nazi anti-Semitism by 'stressing the influence of Zionists upon the governments of various nations'. Bruning never replied, 'nor were the Zionists successful in their attempts to obtain governmental support of emigration to Palestine as a constructive outlet for internal pressure'.(10)

Any such statement from Bruning would have been meaningless, unless he had been prepared to crush the Nazis. Any announcement that the government was aiding Jews to

leave would have been counterproductive in encouraging the Nazis to increase their efforts in the certainty that the regime was weakening in its defence of Jewish rights. However, Bruning did nothing because the Zionists were bluffing that they had any influence upon 'the governments of various nations,, especially Britain.

Weizmann, the prestigious scientist and President of the WZO, who was well connected in London, did next to nothing for German Jewry. He had never liked them, nor did he have any sympathy for their defence efforts against anti-Semitism. As early as 18 March 1912 he had actually been brazen enough to tell a Berlin audience that 'each country can absorb only a limited number of Jews, if she doesn't want disorders in her stomach. Germany already has too many Jews.'<sup>11</sup> In his chat with Balfour, in 1914, he went further, telling him that 'we too are in agreement with the cultural anti-Semites, in so far as we believed that Germans of the Mosaic faith are an undesirable, demoralizing phenomena'. (12) He visited Germany several times in the last years of Weimar. His friends there told him that they did not even want Jews elsewhere to demonstrate on their behalf. Rather, he should get British Conservatives to let it be known that Hitler would discredit himself with them by anti-Semitic actions. Weizmann approached Robert Boothby, a Conservative MP, who told him that quite frankly most Tories saw Hitler as saving Germany from Communism and were far less concerned about his anti-Semitism. (13) By January 1932 Weizmann concluded that emigration of some of Germany's Jews lay ahead. Although he had lost the support of the World Zionist Congress in 1931, had stepped down as President of the organisation and was thus unburdened by office, he did nothing further to mobilise the world or Jewry against Hitler.

In Germany itself the ZVfD never tried to bring the Jews out into the streets, but the *Rundschau* felt free to threaten that the Jews would come out - in New York. In reality, not one demonstration against Hitler was organised in America by the Zionists before he came to power. Rabbi Wise, leader of the American Jewish Congress, did get together with the assimilationists of the American Jewish Committee to ask the leaders of German Jewry how they could help. The German Jewish bourgeoisie merely thanked them for the gesture and assured the Americans that they would be contacted if things got worse. Wise wanted to try for a statement from President Hoover but even that was too radical for the American Jewish Committee, and Wise dropped the matter. Wise and Nahum Goldmann did organise a World Jewish Conference in Geneva in the summer of 1932, but Goldmann, extremely committed, was unwilling to work with assimilationists. (14) Zionism was a minority movement in Jewry at that time; the conference did little more than preach to the converted, and only a minority of the converted at that, since neither Weizmann nor Nahum Sokolow, who had succeeded him as President of the WZO, attended. Nothing came of the meeting and indeed neither Wise nor Goldmann appreciated the full seriousness of the situation. Goldmann, always a believer in the influence of the Great Powers, told the 1932 ZVfD convention that Britain and France, and Russia, would never let Hitler come to power. (15) Stephen Wise retreated even further into that world where perhaps things would not be 'as bad as we dreaded'. On hearing of Hitler's coming to power, he felt the only real danger lay in Hitler's failing to keep his other promises. Then 'he may finally decide that he must yield to his fellow Nazis in the matter of anti-Semitism'. (16)

## 'Liberalism is the Enemy; It is also the Enemy for Nazism'

Given that the German Zionists agreed with two fundamental elements in Nazi ideology - that the Jews would never be part of the German Volk and, therefore, they did not belong on German soil - it was inevitable that some Zionists would believe an accommodation possible. If Wise could delude himself that Hitler was the moderate in the Nazis, ranks, why could not others talk themselves into believing that there were elements in the NSDAP who might restrain Hitler? Stephen Poppel has touched on this debate within the ZVfD:

Some Zionists thought that there might be respectable and moderate elements within the Nazi movement who would serve to restrain it from within ... These elements might serve as suitable negotiating partners for reaching some kind of German-Jewish accommodation. There was serious division over this possibility, with Weltsch [editor of the *Rundschau* ], for example, arguing in its behalf and Blumenfeld sharply opposing it. (17)

Nor was Robert Weltsch alone. Gustav Krojanker, an editor at the *Judischer Verlag*, the oldest Zionist publishing house in Europe, also saw the two movements' common roots in Volkist irrationalism, and drew the conclusion that Zionists should look positively at the nationalist aspects of Nazism. A benign approach toward their fellow Volkists, he naively reasoned, would perhaps bring forth an equivalent benevolence toward Zionism on the part of the Nazis. (18) As far as Krojanker and many other Zionists were concerned, democracy's day was over. Harry Sacher, a Briton, one of the leaders of the WZO in the period, explained Krojanker's theories in a review of Krojanker's book, *Zum Problem des Neuen Deutschen Nationalismus*:

For Zionists, Liberalism is the enemy; it is also the enemy for Nazism; ergo, Zionism should have much sympathy and understanding for Nazism, of which anti-Semitism is probably a fleeting accident. (19)

No Zionist wanted Hitler to come to power, no Zionist voted for him and neither Weltsch nor Krojanker collaborated with the Nazis prior to 30 January 1933. Collaboration only emerged later. But these notions were the logical result of decades of Zionist justification for anti-Semitism and failure to resist it. It cannot be argued in their defence that the Zionist leaders did not know what was going to happen when Hitler came to power. He had said more than enough to guarantee that, at the very least, the Jews would be reduced to second-class citizenship. In addition, they knew that Hitler was an admirer of Mussolini and that ten years of Fascism in Italy had meant terror, torture and dictatorship. But in their hostility to liberalism and its commitment to Jewish assimilation, and as opponents of Jews utilising their full democratic rights within the parliamentary system, the Fascist aspect of Nazism never unduly disturbed the leaders of the ZVfD. It never occurred to these sectarians that they had a duty to democracy to mobilise in its defence. The grave implications of another Fascist regime, this time with an avowed anti-Jewish position, in the very heart of Europe, completely eluded them.

Dante has false diviners walking backwards, their faces reversed on their necks, tears pouring from their eyes. For ever. So it is for all who misunderstood Hitler.

## Notes

1. Herbert Strauss (ed.), *Gegenwart Im Ruckblick* (Heidelberg, 1970), p. 231.
2. Stephen Poppel, *Zionism in Germany 1897/1933*, p. 119.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Jacob Agus, *The Meaning of Jewish History*, vol. II, p. 425.
5. Margaret EdelheimMuehsam, 'Reactions of the Jewish Press to the Nazi Challenge', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, vol. V (1960), p. 312.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
7. Donald Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, p. 30.
8. Donald Niewyk, *Socialist, AntiSemite and Jew*, p. 213.
9. Leonard Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain*, p. 209.
10. Eliazer Livneh, 'Germany: Relations with Zionism and Israel', *Encyclopaedia of Zionism and Israel*, vol. I, p. 385.
11. Benyamin Matuvo, 'The Zionist Wish and the Nazi Deed', *Issues* (Winter 1966/7), p. 9.
12. Chaim Weizmann to Ahad Ha'am, in Leonard Stein (ed.), *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Letters*, vol. VII, p. 81.
13. Shlomo Shafir, 'American Jewish Leaders and the Emerging Nazi Threat (1928/1933)', *American Jewish Archives* (November 1979), p. 172.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
15. Walter Laqueur, *History of Zionism*, p. 499.
16. Shafir, 'American Jewish Leaders and the Emerging Nazi Threat', p. 181.
17. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany*, p. 161.
18. Herbert Strauss, *Jewish Reactions to the Rise of AntiSemitism in Germany*, p. 13.
19. Harry Sacher, review of Gustav Krojanker, *Zum Problem des Neuen Deutschen Nationalismus*, *Jewish Review* (London, September 1932), p. 104.

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## CHAPTER 4

## ZIONISM AND ITALIAN FASCISM, 1922-1933

The World Zionist Organisation's attitude toward Italian Fascism was determined by one criterion: Italy's position on Zionism. When Mussolini was hostile to them, Weizmann was critical of him; but when he became pro-Zionist, the Zionist leadership enthusiastically supported him. On the day Hitler came to power they were already friends with the first Fascist leader.

As a revolutionary, Mussolini had always worked with Jews in the Italian Socialist Party, and it was not until he abandoned the left that he first began to echo the anti-Semitic ideas of the northern European right-wing. Four days after the Bolsheviks took power, he announced that their victory was a result of a plot between the 'Synagogue', that is, 'Ceorbaum' (Lenin), 'Bronstein' (Trotsky), and the German Army. [(1)] By 1919 he has Communism explained: the Jewish bankers --'Rotschild', 'Wamberg', 'Schyff' and 'Guggenheim'-- were behind the Communist Jews. [(2)] But Mussolini was not so anti-Semitic as to exclude Jews from his new party and there were five among the founders of the Fascist movement. Nor was anti-Semitism important to his ideology; in fact it was not well received by his followers.

Anti-Semitism in Italy had always been identified in the public mind with Catholic obscurantism. It was the Church which had forced the Jews into the ghettos and Italian nationalists had always supported the Jews against the Popes, whom they saw as opponents of a united Italy. In 1848 the walls of the Roman ghetto were destroyed by the revolutionary Roman Republic. With their defeat the ghetto was restored, but the final victory of the nationalist Kingdom of Italy in 1870 brought an end to discrimination against the Jews. The Church blamed the Jews for the nationalist victory, and the official Jesuit organ, *Civiltà Cattolica*, continued to insist that they had only been defeated by 'conspiracies with the Jews [that] were formed by Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour, Farini and De Pretis'. [(3)] But this clerical ranting against the heroes of Italian nationalism merely discredited anti-Semitism, particularly among the anti-clerical youth of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. Since the essence of Fascism was the mobilisation of the middle class against Marxism, Mussolini listened carefully to his followers' objections: what was the point of denouncing Communism as a Jewish conspiracy, if the Jews themselves were not unpopular?

### **'True Jews have never Fought against You'**

As with many another, Mussolini originally combined anti-Semitism with pro-Zionism, and his *Popolo d'Italia* continued to favour Zionism until 1919, when he concluded that Zionism was merely a cat's-paw for the British and he began to refer to the local Zionist movement as 'so-called Italians'. [(4)] All Italian politicians shared this suspicion of Zionism, including two Foreign Ministers of Jewish descent --Sidney Sonnino and Carlo Schanzar. The Italian line on Palestine was that Protestant Britain had no real standing in the country as there were no native Protestants there. What they wanted in Palestine was an international 'Holy Land'. In agreeing with the position of the pre-Fascist governments on Palestine and Zionism, Mussolini was primarily motivated by imperial rivalry with Britain and by hostility to any political grouping in Italy having a loyalty to an international

movement.

Mussolini's March on Rome of October 1922 worried the Italian Zionist Federation. They had no love for the preceding Facta government, given its anti-Zionism, but the Fascisti were no better on that score, and Mussolini had made clear his own anti-Semitism. However, their concerns about anti-Semitism were lifted immediately; the new government hastened to inform Angelo Sacerdoti, the chief rabbi of Rome and an active Zionist, that they would not support anti-Semitism either at home or abroad. The Zionists then obtained an audience with Mussolini on 20 December 1922. They assured the Duce of their loyalty. Ruth Bondy, a Zionist writer on Italian Jewry, relates: 'The delegation, on its part, argued that Italian Jews would always remain loyal to their native land and could help establish relations with the Levant through the Jewish communities there.' [(5)]

Mussolini bluntly told them that he still saw Zionism as a tool of the British, but their pledge of loyalty softened his hostility somewhat and he agreed to meet Chaim Weizmann, the President of the WZO, who attended on 3 January 1923. Weizmann's autobiography is deliberately vague, and often misleading, on his relations with the Italian, but fortunately it is possible to learn something of the meeting from the report given at the time to the British Embassy in Rome. This explains how Weizmann tried to deal with the objection that Zionism wore Britain's livery: 'Dr Weizmann, whilst denying that this was in any way the case, said that, even if it were so, Italy stood to gain as much as Great Britain by a weakening of Moslem power.' [(6)]

This answer cannot have inspired too much confidence in Mussolini, but he was pleased when Weizmann asked permission to name an Italian Zionist to the commission running their settlement in Palestine. Weizmann knew the Italian public would see this as Fascist toleration for the WZO, which would make it easier for Zionism amongst wary Jews, frightened at the thought of coming into conflict with the new regime. Mussolini saw it the other way around; by such a cheap gesture he would win support both at home and abroad from the Jewish community.

The meeting produced no change in Italian policy toward Zionism or the British, and the Italians continued to obstruct Zionist efforts by harassing tactics on the League of Nations Mandate Commission. Weizmann never, then or later, mobilised opposition to what Mussolini did to Italians, but he had to say something about a regime that actively opposed Zionism. He spoke out, in America, on 26 March 1923:

Today there is a tremendous political wave, known as Fascism, which is sweeping over Italy. As an Italian movement it is no business of ours --it is the business of the Italian Government. But this wave is now breaking against the little Jewish community, and the little community, which never asserted itself, is today suffering from anti-Semitism. [(7)]

Italian policy toward Zionism only changed in the mid-1920s, when their consuls in Palestine concluded that Zionism was there to stay and that Britain would only leave the country if and when the Zionists got their own state. Weizmann was invited back to Rome for another conference on 17 September 1926. Mussolini was more than cordial; he offered to help the Zionists build up their economy and the Fascist press began printing favourable articles on Palestinian Zionism.



Zionist leaders began to visit Rome. Nahum Sokolow, then the Chairman of the Zionist Executive and later, in 1931-33, the President of the WZO, appeared on 26 October 1927. Michael Ledeen, a specialist on Fascism and the Jewish question, has described the political outcome of the Sokolow-Mussolini talks:

With this last meeting Mussolini became lionised by Zionism. Sokolow not only praised the Italian as a human being but announced his firm belief that Fascism was immune from anti-Semitic preconceptions. He went even further: in the past there might have been uncertainty about the true nature of Fascism, but now, 'we begin to understand its true nature ... true Jews have never fought against you'.

These words, tantamount to a Zionist endorsement of the Fascist regime, were echoed in Jewish periodicals all over the world. In this period, which saw a new legal relationship established between the Jewish community and the Fascist state, expressions of loyalty and affection for Fascism poured out of the Jewish centers of Italy.[(8)]

Not all Zionists were pleased with Sokolow's remarks. The Labour Zionists were loosely affiliated to the underground Italian Socialist Party via the Socialist International and they complained, but the Italian Zionists were overjoyed. Prosperous and extremely religious, these conservatives saw Mussolini as their support against Marxism and its concomitant assimilation. In 1927 rabbi Sacerdoti gave an interview to the journalist Guido Bedarida:

Professor Sacerdoti is persuaded that many of the fundamental principles of the Fascist Doctrine such as: the observance of the laws of the state, respect of traditions, the principle of authority, exaltation of religious values, a desire for the moral and physical cleanliness of family and the individual, the struggle for an increase of production, and therefore a struggle against Malthusianism, are no more or less than Jewish principles.[(9)]

The ideological leader of Italian Zionism was the lawyer Alfonso Pacifici. An extremely pious man, he ensured that the Italian Zionists were to become the most religious branch of the world movement. In 1932 another interviewer told of how Pacifici also:

expressed to me his conviction that the new conditions would bring about a revival of Italian Jewry. Indeed, he claimed to have evolved a philosophy of Judaism akin to the spiritual Tendenz of Fascism long before this had become the rule of life in Italian polity.[(10)]

### **Establishment of Relations between Mussolini and Hitler**

If the Zionists at least hesitated until Mussolini warmed to them before they responded, Hitler had no such inhibitions. From the beginning of the Fascist take-over, Hitler used Mussolini's example as proof that a terror dictatorship could overthrow a weak bourgeois democracy and then set about smashing the workers' movements. After he came to power he acknowledged his debt to Mussolini in a discussion with the Italian ambassador in March 1933. 'Your Excellency knows how great an admiration I have for Mussolini, whom I consider the spiritual head of my "movement" as well, since if he had not succeeded in assuming power in Italy, National Socialism would not have had the slightest chance in Germany.[(11)]

Hitler had two cavils with Fascism: Mussolini savagely oppressed the Germans in the south Tyrol which the Italians had won at Versailles, and he welcomed Jews into the Fascist

Party. But Hitler saw, quite correctly, that what the two of them wanted was so similar that, eventually, they would come together. He insisted that a quarrel with the Italians over the Tyrolians would only serve the Jews; therefore, unlike most German rightists, he was always willing to abandon the Tyrolians.[(12)] Furthermore, in spite of the fact that he had no knowledge of Mussolini's earlier anti-Semitic remarks, in 1926, in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler declared that in his heart of hearts the Italian was an anti-Semite.

The struggle that FASCIST ITALY is waging, though perhaps in the last analysis unconsciously (which I personally do not believe), against the three main weapons of the Jews is the best indication that, even though indirectly, the poison fangs of this supra-state power are being torn out. The prohibition on Masonic secret societies, the persecution of the supra-national press, as well as the continued demolition of international Marxism, and, conversely, the steady reinforcement of the Fascist state conception, will in the course of the years cause the Italian government to serve the interests of the Italian people more and more, without regard for the hissing of the Jewish world hydra.[(13)]

But if Hitler was pro-Mussolini, it did not follow that Mussolini would be pro-Nazi. Throughout the 1920s the Duce kept repeating his famous 'Fascism is not an article for export'. Certainly after the failure of the Beer Hall putsch and the Nazis' meagre 6.5 per cent in the 1924 elections, Hitler represented nothing. It required the Depression and Hitler's sudden electoral success, before Mussolini began to take serious notice of his German counterpart. Now he began to talk of Europe going Fascist within ten years, and his press began to report favourably about Nazism. But at the same time he repudiated Hitler's Nordic racism and anti-Semitism. Completely disoriented by his philo-Semitism, the Zionists hoped that Mussolini would be a moderating influence on Hitler when he came to power.[(14)] In October 1932, on the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome, Pacifici rhapsodised about the differences between the real Fascism in Rome and its ersatz in Berlin. He saw:

radical differences between the true and authentic Fascism --Italian Fascism, that is-- and the pseudo-Fascist movements in other countries which ... are often using the most reactionary phobias, and especially the blind, unbridled hatred of the Jews, as a means of diverting the masses from their real problems, from the real causes of their misery, and from the real culprits.[(15)]

Later, after the Holocaust, in his autobiography *Trial and Error*, Weizmann lamely tried to establish an anti-Fascist record for the Italian Zionists: 'The Zionists, and the Jews generally, though they did not give loud expression to their views on the subject, were known to be 'anti-Fascist'.[(16)] Given Mussolini's anti-Zionism in the early years of his Fascist career, as well as his anti-Semitic comments, Zionists hardly favoured him in 1922. But, as we have seen, they pledged their loyalty to the new power once Mussolini assured them that he was not anti-Semitic. In the first years of the regime, the Zionists knew he resented their international affiliations, but that did not bring them to anti-Fascism and, certainly after the statements in 1927 by Sokolow and Sacerdoti, the Zionists could only be thought of as Mussolini's good friends.

## Notes

1. Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 12.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. Daniel Carpi, 'The Catholic Church and Italian Jewry under the Fascist', *Yad Vashem Studies* vol. IV, p. 44n.
4. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 14.
5. Ruth Bondy, *The Emissary: A Life of Enzo Sereni*, p. 45.
6. Daniel Carpi, 'Weizmann's Political Activities in Italy from 1923 to 1934', *Zionism* (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 225.
7. Chaim Weizmann, 'Relief and Reconstruction', *American Addresses* (1923), p. 49.
8. Michael Ledeen, 'Italian Jews and Fascism', *Judaism* (Summer 1969), p. 286.
9. Guido Bedarida, 'The Jews under Mussolini', *Reflex* (October 1927), p.58.
10. Paul Goodman, 'Judaism under the Fascist Regime', *Views* (April 1932), p. 46.
11. Carpi, 'Weizmann's Political Activities in Italy', p. 238.
12. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 628.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 637.
14. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 49.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
16. Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 368.

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## CHAPTER 5

### GERMAN ZIONISM OFFERS TO COLLABORATE WITH NAZISM

Werner Senator, a leading German Zionist, once remarked that Zionism, for all its world Jewish nationalism, always politically assimilates to the countries within which it operates. No better proof of his remark exists than the political adaptation of the ZVfD to the theories and policies of the new Nazi regime. Believing that the ideological similarities between the two movements --their contempt for liberalism, their common volkish racism and, of course, their mutual conviction that Germany could never be the homeland of its Jews--could induce the Nazis to support them, the ZVfD solicited the patronage of Adolf Hitler, not once but repeatedly, after 1933.

The goal of the ZVfD became an 'orderly retreat', that is, Nazi backing for emigration of at

least the younger generation of Jews to Palestine, and they immediately sought contact with elements in the Nazi apparatus whom they thought would be interested in such an arrangement on the basis of a volkish appreciation of Zionism. Kurt Tuchler, a member of the ZVfD Executive, persuaded Baron Leopold Itz Edler von Mildenstein of the SS to write a pro-Zionist piece for the Nazi press. The Baron agreed on the condition that he visited Palestine first, and two months after Hitler came to power the two men and their wives went to Palestine; von Mildenstein stayed there for six months before he returned to write his articles.[(1)]

Contact with a central figure in the new government came in March 1933, when Hermann Goering summoned the leaders of the major Jewish organisations. In early March, Julius Streicher, the editor of *Der Stürmer*, had declared that, as of 1 April, all Jewish stores and professionals would be boycotted; however, this campaign ran into an immediate snag. Hitler's capitalist backers were extremely worried by the announcement by Rabbi Wise of a planned counter-demonstration to be held in New York on 27 March, if the Nazis went ahead with their boycott. Jews were prominent throughout the retail trade both in America and Europe and, fearing retaliation against their own companies, Hitler's wealthy patrons urged him to call off the action. But the Nazis could hardly do that without losing face, and they decided to use German Jewry to head off Wise; thus Hermann Goering called in the Jewish leaders.

German Zionism's influence in Weimar did not merit its leaders' participation, but because they conceived themselves as the only natural negotiating partner with the Nazis, they secured a late invitation. Martin Rosenbluth, a leading Zionist, later told of the incident in his post-war autobiography, *Go Forth and Serve*. Four Jews saw Goering: Julius Brodnitz for the CV, Heinrich Stahl for the Berlin Jewish community, Max Naumann, a pro-Nazi fanatic from the *Verband nationaldeutscher Juden* (VnJ), and Blumenfeld for the Zionists. Goering launched into a tirade: the foreign press was lying about atrocities against Jews; unless the lies stopped, he could not vouch for the safety of German Jewry. Most important, the New York rally had to be called off: 'Dr Wise is one of our most dangerous and unscrupulous enemies.'[(2)] A delegation was to go to London to contact world Jewry.

The assimilationists declined, claiming that as Germans they had no influence with foreign Jews. This was false, but they hardly wanted to assist in their own destruction. Only Blumenfeld volunteered, but insisted he be allowed to speak truthfully about the Nazi treatment of Jews. Goering did not care what was said to get the rally called off; perhaps a description of the grim situation might make foreign Jews halt for fear of provoking worse. He did not care who went or what arguments were used as long as the deputation agreed to 'report regularly to the German embassy'.[(3)]

The ZVfD finally sent Martin Rosenbluth and Richard Lichtheim. Fearing exclusive responsibility for the outcome of their strange mission, they prevailed upon the CV to let them take along Dr Ludwig Tietz. Although not a Zionist personally, the wealthy businessman was 'a good friend of ours'.[(4)] The trio arrived in London on 27 March and immediately met forty Jewish leaders at a meeting chaired by Nahum Sokolow, then President of the WZO. They later met a battery of British officials. The delegates saw two

tasks before them: to use the severity of the situation to promote Palestine as 'the logical place of refuge', and to head off all anti-Nazi efforts abroad. They called Wise in New York. Rosenbluth described the incident thus in his memoirs:

Mindful of Goering's charges... we conveyed the message... Getting the cryptic rest of our message across to him was somewhat more difficult, since it was necessary to speak in obscure terms in order to confound any possible monitors. Subsequent events proved we had made clear our hidden plea, and that Dr Wise had understood we wanted him to stand firm and under no circumstances cancel the meeting.[(5)]

There is no evidence that any effort was made to signal Wise to this effect. Through the research of an Israeli scholar, Shaul Esh, it is now known that the deputation tried to head off demonstrations in New York and Palestine. According to Esh, later that evening they sent cables:

not in their own name, but in the name of the Zionist Executive in London. The telegrams requested that the recipients immediately dispatch to the Chancellery of the Third Reich declarations to the effect that they do not condone an organised anti-German boycott... the Zionist Executive in London learned of this several hours later, they sent another cable to Jerusalem to delay the dispatch of an official declaration to Hitler.[(6)]

Later, in his own autobiography, *Challenging Years*, Stephen Wise mentioned receiving their cable, but he did not record any cryptic message from the delegation.[(7)] It is reasonable to assume that he would have recorded it, if he had thought any such attempt was made. In reality, Wise repeatedly raged at the ZVfD in the following years for persistently opposing every attempt by foreign Jews to struggle against the Hitler regime.

The London proceedings were typical of all further ZVfD behaviour. In 1937, after leaving Berlin for America, rabbi Joachim Prinz wrote of his experiences in Germany and alluded to a memorandum which, it is now known, was sent to the Nazi Party by the ZVfD on 21 June 1933. Prinz's article candidly describes the Zionist mood in the first months of 1933:

Everyone in Germany knew that only the Zionists could responsibly represent the Jews in dealings with the Nazi government. We all felt sure that one day the government would arrange a round table conference with the Jews, at which --after the riots and atrocities of the revolution had passed-- the new status of German Jewry could be considered. The government announced very solemnly that there was no country in the world which tried to solve the Jewish problem as seriously as did Germany. Solution of the Jewish question? It was our Zionist dream! We never denied the existence of the Jewish question! Dissimilation? It was our own appeal!... In a statement notable for its pride and dignity, we called for a conference.[(8)]

The document remained buded until 1962, when it was finally printed, in German, in Israel. 'Pride' and 'dignity' are words open to interpretation but, it is safe to say, there was not one word that could be so construed today. This extraordinary memorandum demands extensive quotation. The Nazis were asked, very politely:

May we therefore be permitted to present our views, which, in our opinion, make possible a solution in keeping with the principles of the new German State of National Awakening and which at the same time might signify for Jews a new ordering of the conditions of their existence... Zionism has no illusions about the difficulty of the Jewish condition, which consists above all in an abnormal occupational pattern and in the fault of an intellectual and moral posture not rooted in one's own tradition...

... an answer to the Jewish question truly satisfying to the national state can be brought about only with the collaboration of the Jewish movement that aims at a social, cultural, and moral renewal of Jewry... a rebirth of national life, such as is occurring in German life through adhesion to Christian and national values, must also take place in the Jewish national group. For the Jew, too, origin, religion, community of fate and group consciousness must be of decisive significance in the shaping of his life...

On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit our community into the total structure so that for us too, in the sphere assigned to us, fruitful activity for the Fatherland is possible... Our acknowledgement of Jewish nationality provides for a clear and sincere relationship to the German people and its national and racial realities. Precisely because we do not wish to falsify these fundamentals, because we, too, are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group...

... fidelity to their own kind and their own culture gives Jews the inner strength that prevents insult to the respect for the national sentiments and the imponderables of German nationality; and rootedness in one's own spirituality protects the Jew from becoming the rootless critic of the national foundations of German essence. The national distancing which the state desires would thus be brought about easily as the result of an organic development.

Thus, a self-conscious Jewry here described, in whose name we speak, can find a place in the structure of the German state, because it is inwardly unembarrassed, free from the resentment which assimilated Jews must feel at the determination that they belong to Jewry, to the Jewish race and past. We believe in the possibility of an honest relationship of loyalty between a group - conscious Jewry and the German state...

For its practical aims, Zionism hopes to be able to win the collaboration even of a government fundamentally hostile to Jews, because in dealing with the Jewish question no sentimentalities are involved but a real problem whose solution interests all peoples, and at the present moment especially the German people.

The realisation of Zionism could only be hurt by resentment of Jews abroad against the German development. Boycott propaganda --such as is currently being carried on against Germany in many ways-- is in essence un-Zionist, because Zionism wants not to do battle but to convince and to build... Our observations, presented herewith, rest on the conviction that, in solving the Jewish problem according to its own lights, the German Government will have full understanding for a candid and clear Jewish posture that harmonizes with the interests of the state.[(9)]

This document, a treason to the Jews of Germany, was written in standard Zionist clichés: 'abnormal occupational pattern', 'rootless intellectuals greatly in need of moral regeneration', etc. In it the German Zionists offered calculated collaboration between Zionism and Nazism, hallowed by the goal of a Jewish state: we shall wage no battle against thee, only against those that would resist thee.

Obsessed with their strange mission, the ZVfD's leaders lost all sense of international Jewish perspective and even tried to get the WZO to call off its World Congress, scheduled for August 1933. They sent their world leadership a letter: 'It will have to express sharp protests,, their lives could be at stake at a time when 'our legal existence has enabled us to organise thousands and to transfer large sums of money to Palestine'.[(10)] The Congress did take place as we shall see, but the ZVfD had nothing to worry about as the Nazis chose to use the occasion to announce that they had made a deal with world Zionism.

## **'Seeking its own National Idealism in the Nazi Spirit'**

The Jewish public knew nothing about von Mildenstein's journey to Palestine in the company of a member of the Zionist Executive, nor about Rosenbluth and Lichtheim's trip to London; nor did they know about the memorandum, nor the request to call off the Zionist Congress. However, they could not miss what was appearing in the *Rundschau*, where assimilationist German Jewry was roundly attacked. The CV complained bitterly of Zionist 'siegesfanfaren' as the *Rundschau* rushed to condemn the guilty Jews.[(11)] The editor, Robert Weltsch, took the occasion of the 1 April boycott to assail the Jews of Germany in an editorial: 'Wear the Yellow Badge with Pride':

At times of crisis throughout its history, the Jewish people has faced the question of its own guilt. Our most important prayer says, 'We were expelled from our country because of our sins'... Jewry bears a great guilt because it failed to heed Theodor Herzl's call... Because the Jews did not display their Jewishness with pride, because they wanted to shirk the Jewish question, they must share the blame for the degradation of Jewry.[(12)]

Even as the Nazis were in the process of throwing the left into concentration camps, Weltsch attacked the left-wing Jewish journalists:

If today the National Socialist and German patriotic newspapers frequently refer to the type of the Jewish scribbler and the so-called Jewish press... it must be pointed out... Upright Jews have always been indignant at the raillery and the caricature directed by Jewish buffoons against Jews to the same extent, or even a greater extent, than they aimed them at Germans and others.[(13)]

Although the left-wing press had been under attack from the day the Nazis came to power, the Jewish newspapers were still legal. Naturally they were censored; if a journal printed something untoward, it would be closed down, temporarily at least. However, the Nazis did not force the Zionists to denounce their fellow Jews.

After the Holocaust Weltsch was quite contrite about the editorial, saying that he should have told the Jews to flee for their lives, but he never claimed that the Nazis made him write the piece. Weltsch was not a Fascist, but he was too much the Zionist sectarian to have really thought through his ideas about the world at large. As were most of the leaders of the ZVfD, he was quite convinced that 'egotistical liberalism' and parliamentary democracy were dead at least in Germany. Internationally, they were still for the British in Palestine, but the *Rundschau's* correspondent in Italy, Kurt Kornicker, was quite openly pro-Fascist.[(14)] The ZVfD's leaders became convinced that Fascism was the wave of the future, certainly in Central Europe, and within that framework they counterposed the 'good' Fascism of Mussolini to the 'excesses' of Hitlerism, which they thought would diminish, with their assistance, as time went by.

Racism was now triumphant and the ZVfD ran with the winner. The talk of blut began to take hold with a statement by Blumenfeld in April 1933 that the Jews had previously been masking their natural blood-sanctioned apartness from the real Germans, but it reached Wagnerian proportions in the 4 August *Rundschau* with a long essay, 'Rasse als Kulturfaktor', which pondered on the intellectual implications for Jews of the Nazi victory. It argued that Jews should not merely accept silently the dictates of their new masters; they,

too, had to realise that race separation was wholly to the good:

We who live here as a 'foreign race' have to respect racial consciousness and the racial interest of the German people absolutely. This however does not preclude a peaceful living together of people of different racial membership. The smaller the possibility of an undesirable mixture, so much less is there need for 'racial protection'... There are differentiations that in the last analysis have their root in ancestry. Only rationalist newspapers who have lost feeling for the deeper reasons and profundities of the soul, and for the origins of communal consciousness, could put aside ancestry as simply in the realm of 'natural history'.

In the past, the paper continued, it had been hard to get Jews to have an objective evaluation of racism. But now was the time, indeed past time, for a bit of 'quiet evaluation': 'Race is undoubtedly a very important, yes, decisive momentum. Out of "blood and soil" really is determined the being of a people and their achievements.' Jews would have to make good for 'the last generations when Jewish racial consciousness was largely neglected. The article warned against 'bagatellised' race, and also against the CV, who were beginning to abandon their traditional assimilationist ideology in the wake of the disaster, but 'without changing basically'.

Challenging the racist bona fides of their rivals was not enough. To prove that the 'Jewish Renaissance Movement' had always been racist, the Rundschau reprinted two pre-1914 articles under the title 'Voices of the Blood'. 'Das singende Blut' by Stefan Zweig and 'Lied des Blutes' by Hugo Salus rhapsodised about how 'the modern Jew... recognizes his Jewishness... through an inner experience which teaches him the special language of his blood in a mystical manner'.

But although these mimics of the Nazis were confirmed racists, they were not chauvinists. They did not think they were racially superior to the Arabs. The Zionists were even going to uplift their benighted Semitic cousins. Their volkism was only a warped answer to their own 'personality problem', as they put it: it allowed them to reconcile themselves to the existence of anti-Semitism in Germany without fighting it. They hastened to reassure their readers that many modern nations and states were racially mixed and yet the races could live in harmony. Jews were warned: now that they were to become racists, they should not become chauvinists: 'above race is humanity'.[(15)]

Although racism permeated through the ZVfD's literature, foreign Jewish observers always saw Joachim Prinz as its most strident propagandist. A Social Democratic voter before 1933, Prinz became rabidly volkist in the first years of the Third Reich. Some of the violent hostility towards Jews in his book *Wir Juden* could have been inserted directly into the Nazis' own propaganda. To Prinz the Jew was made up of 'misplacement, of queerness, of exhibitionism, inferiority, arrogance, self-deceit, sophisticated love of truth, hate, sickly, patriotism and rootless cosmopolitanism... a psychopathological arsenal of rare abundance'. [(16)]

Prinz was deeply contemptuous of the rational and liberal traditions which had been the



common basis of all progressive thought since the American Revolution. For him the harm that liberalism had done was compensated for only by the fact that it was dying:

Parliament and democracy are increasingly shattered. The exaggerated harmful emphasis on the value of the individual is recognised to be mistaken; the concept and reality of the nation and the folk is gaining, to our happiness, more and more ground. [(17)]

Prinz believed that an accommodation between Nazis and Jews was possible, but only on the basis of a Zionist-Nazi accord: 'A state which is constructed on the principle of the purity of nation and race can only have respect for those Jews who see themselves in the same way. [(18)]

After he came to the United States Prinz realised that nothing he had been saying in Germany sounded rational in a democratic context and he abandoned his bizarre notions, further proof that the German Zionists had simply adapted ideologically to Nazism. [(19)] But perhaps the best illustration of the Zionists' Nazification was the curious statement by one of the Rundschau's editors, Arnold Zweig, made in his *Insulted and Exiled*, naturally written abroad and published in 1937:

of all the newspapers published in German, the most independent, the most courageous, and the ablest was the *Judische Rundschau*, the official organ of the Zionist Union of Germany. Although it sometimes went too far in its approval of the Nationalist State (seeking its own national idealism in the Nazi spirit), there, nevertheless, issued from it a stream of energy, tranquility, warmth, and confidence of which the German Jews and Jewry the world over stood in urgent need. [(20)]

### **'The Exclusive Control of German Jewish Life'**

Not even the Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 challenged the basic German Zionist belief in an ultimate *modus vivendi* with the Nazis. The HeChalutz (Pioneer) Centre, in charge of training youth for the kibbutz movement, concluded that the promulgation of laws making mixed marriage a crime was a suitable occasion for a new approach to the regime. The Pioneers came up with a plan for the emigration of the entire Jewish community over a period of 15-25 years. Abraham Margalio, a scholar at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Institute, has explained the thinking at the Centre in that fateful year:

The HeChalutz leaders assumed that this underlying goal would prove so alluring to the German authorities that they would agree to extend aid towards further emigration abroad by liberalizing the laws governing the transfer of foreign currency abroad, by providing opportunities for vocational training and by 'political means'. [(21)]

The Rundschau published excerpts from a speech in which Hitler announced that his government still hoped to find a basis for 'a better attitude towards the Jews'. [(22)] The paper published a statement by A.I. Brandt, the head of the Nazis' press association, which informed a doubtlessly somewhat surprised world that the laws were:

both beneficial and regenerative for Judaism as well. By giving the Jewish minority an opportunity to lead its own life and assuring governmental support for this independent existence, Germany is helping Judaism to strengthen its national character and is making a contribution towards improving relations between the two peoples. [(23)]

The goal of the ZVfD became 'national autonomy'. They wanted Hitler to give Jews the

right to an economic existence, protection from attacks on their honour, and training to prepare them for migration. The ZVfD became absorbed in trying to utilise the segregated Jewish institutions to develop a Jewish national spirit. The tighter the Nazis turned the screw on the Jews, the more convinced they became that a deal with the Nazis was possible. After all, they reasoned, the more the Nazis excluded the Jews from every aspect of German life, the more they would have need of Zionism to help them get rid of the Jews. By 15 January 1936 the Palestine Post had to make the startling report that: 'A bold demand that the German Zionist Federation be given recognition by the government as the only instrument for the exclusive control of German Jewish life was made by the executive of that body in a proclamation today.'[(24)]

German Zionist hopes for an arrangement faded only in the face of the ever-mounting intimidation and terror. Even then there was no sign of any attempts at anti-Nazi activity on the part of the ZVfD leaders. Throughout the entire pre-war period there was only a tiny Zionist involvement in the anti-Nazi underground. Although the HeChalutz and Hashomer youth movements talked socialism, the Nazis were not concerned. Yechiel Greenberg of Hashomer admitted in 1938 that 'our socialism was considered merely a philosophy for export'[(25)] But almost from the beginning of the dictatorship the underground KPD, always looking for new recruits, sent some of their Jewish cadre into the youth movements and, according to Arnold Paucker--now the editor of London's Leo Baeck Institute Year Book-- some Zionist youth became involved with the resistance at least to the extent of some illegal postering in the early years of the regime.[(26)] How much of this was due to the influence of the Communist infiltrators, and how much was spontaneous is impossible to estimate. However, the Zionist bureaucracy vigorously attacked the KPD.[(27)] As in Italy, so in Germany: the Zionist leadership sought the support of the regime for Zionism and resisted Communism; in neither country could it be thought of as part of the anti-Fascist resistance.

The interrelationship between the ZVfD and the WZO will be described below. Suffice to say for now, that the WZO leaders approved of the general line of their German affiliate. However, within the ranks of the world movement there were many who refused to remain silent while their German branch not only accepted second-class citizenship as no more than the Jews had a right to expect but, even worse, denounced foreign Jews for boycotting Germany. Boris Smolar, the chief European correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the Zionist wire service, spoke for all these when he wrote angrily, in 1935:

One can understand that a Jewish newspaper which appears in Germany may not be in a position fully to support the demands of World Jewry with regard to the full restoration of Jewish rights. This, however, doesn't justify any official organ to come out and practically agree to the anti-Jewish limitations which exist in Germany. This last is exactly what the Judische Rundschau has done.[(28)]

Prior to the Nazis, German Zionism was no more than an isolated bourgeois political cult. While the leftists were trying to fight the brownshirts in the streets, the Zionists were busy collecting money for trees in Palestine. Suddenly in 1933 this small group conceived of itself as properly anointed by history to negotiate secretly with the Nazis, to oppose the vast mass of world Jewry who wanted to resist Hitler, all in the hope of obtaining the support of the enemy of their people for the building of their state in Palestine. Smolar and their other

Zionist critics saw the ZVfD as merely cowardly, but they were quite wrong. Any surrender theory explains nothing of the pre-Hitler evolution of Zionist racism, nor does it go far in explaining the WZO's endorsement of their stance. The truth is sadder than cowardice. The plain fact is that Germany's Zionists did not see themselves as surrendering but, rather, as would-be partners in a most statesmanlike pact. They were wholly deluded. No Jews triumphed over other Jews in Nazi Germany. No *modus vivendi* was ever even remotely possible between Hitler and the Jews. Once Hitler had triumphed inside Germany, the position of the Jews was hopeless; all that was left for them was to go into exile and continue the fight from there. Many did, but the Zionists continued to dream of winning the patronage of Adolf Hitler for themselves. They did not fight Hitler before he came to power, when there was still a chance to beat him, not out of any degree of cowardice, but out of their deepest conviction, which they had inherited from Herzl, that anti-Semitism could not be fought. Given their failure to resist during Weimar, and given their race theories, it was inevitable that they would end up as the ideological jackals of Nazism.

## Notes

[(1)]. Jacob Boas, 'A Nazi Travels to Palestine', *History Today* (London, January 1980), p. 33.

[(2)]. Martin Rosenbluth, *Go Forth and Serve*, p. 253.

[(3)]. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[(4)]. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[(5)]. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[(6)]. Yisrael Gutman (in debate), *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust*, p. 116.

[(7)]. Stephen Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 248.

[(8)]. Joachim Prinz, 'Zionism under the Nazi Government', *Young Zionist* (London, November 1937), p. 18.

[(9)]. Lucy Dawidowicz (ed.), *A Holocaust Reader*, pp. 150-5.

[(10)]. Ruth Bondy, *The Emissary: A Life of Enzo Sereni*, pp. 118-19.

[(11)]. Jacob Boas, *The Jews of Germany: Self-Perception in the Nazi Era as Reflected in the German Jewish Press 1933-1938*, PhD thesis, University of California, Riverside (1977), p. 135.

[(12)]. Dawidowicz, *A HolocaustReader*, p. 148.

[(13)]. *Ibid.*, p.149.

- [(14)]. Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, p. 122.
- [(15)]. 'Rasse als Kulturfaktor', *Judische Rundschau* (4 August 1933), p. 392.
- [(16)]. Koppel Pinson, 'The Jewish Spirit in Nazi Germany', *Menorah Journal* (Autumn 1936), p. 235.
- [(17)]. Uri Davis, *Israel: Uto pia Incorporated*, p. 18.
- [(18)]. Benyamin Matuvo, 'The Zionist Wish and the Nazi Deed', *Issues* (Winter 1966/7), p. 12.
- [(19)]. Author's interview with Joachim Prinz (8 February 1981).
- [(20)]. Arnold Zweig, *Insulted and Exiled* (London, 1937), p. 232.
- [(21)]. Abraham Margalio, 'The Reaction of the Jewish Public' in *Germany to the Nuremberg Laws*, Yad Vashem Studies, vol. XII, p. 89.
- [(22)]. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- [(23)]. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- [(24)]. 'German Zionists Seek Recognition', *PalestinePost* (15 January 1936), p. 1.
- [(25)]. Yechiel Greenberg, 'Hashomer Hatzair in Europe', *Hashomer Hatzair* (November 1937), p. 13.
- [(26)]. Author's interview with Arnold Paucker, 28 October 1980.
- [(27)]. Giora Josephthal, *The Responsible Attitude*, p. 88.
- [(28)]. Boris Smolar, 'Zionist Overtures to Nazism', *Jewish Daily Bulletin* (8 March 1935), p. 2.

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## CHAPTER 6

### THE JEWISH ANTI-NAZI BOYCOTT AND THE ZIONIST-NAZI TRADE AGREEMENT

It was only the incompetence of his foes that allowed Hitler to come to power, and the new Chancellor still had to prove to his capitalist patrons that he could handle the responsibilities of running Germany. His position was by no means completely secure: the workers were still against him, and the industrialists still had to be shown that he could get the economy moving. Abroad the capitalists wavered between relief that he had crushed the

Communists and fear that he would eventually start another war. Foreign opinion was now crucial: Germany was dependent on the world market, and Hitler's anti-Semitism became a problem. The Jews were powerful in the emporiums of the world, particularly in two of Germany's biggest markets--Eastern Europe and America. German business interests were by no means certain about their loyalty to the new Chancellor; together with their friends in the army they might have to curb him or even replace him, if they were themselves to suffer losses because the Jews and his other foreign foes united in a boycott of German exports. The regime's own economic experts frankly discussed their grave weakness and were extremely concerned that the New Order might not survive resolute opposition abroad.

The Jews moved very slowly but finally New York's Jewish War Veterans (JWV), after considering the consequences for German Jewry, announced a trade boycott on 19 March 1933 and organised a huge protest parade on the 23rd. The Mayor of New York took part and so did the Communists, whom the ex-servicemen refused to allow into the demonstration until they took down their banners. Spurning the thousands of Communists in New York's Jewish community doomed the tiny veteran group's efforts. Politically extremely naive, the veterans ignored the elementary fact that for a boycott to have even the slightest chance of success, it must have the broadest possible organised unity behind it.

Soon after the veterans' failure Abe Coralnik, a Zionist, and Samuel Untermyer, a sympathiser who had donated the money for the new stadium at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, put together what ultimately became the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League. However, boycott picketing was illegal and Untermyer, a Tammany lawyer, would not break the law. Of course, without mass picketing a boycott cannot be enforced and those in the Jewish community who were determined to impose a boycott turned next to Rabbi Wise and the Zionist American Jewish Congress (AJC) to take the lead. At first Wise opposed both demonstrations and a boycott, but by 27 March even he was willing to fill Madison Square Garden for the rally that so disturbed Goering. A large assembly of politicians, churchmen and trade union bureaucrats duly denounced the tyrant in Berlin, but nothing was done to organise mass support. Wise, who had not mobilised the masses before Hitler came to power, was not the one to do it now. On the contrary, he wrote to a friend: 'You cannot imagine what I am doing to resist the masses. They want tremendous street scenes.'<sup>(1)</sup> He opposed a boycott, hoping that a few demonstrations, alone, would press Roosevelt into intervening. But the State Department saw Hitler as a battering ram against Communism, and the domestic politicians, desperately wanting to end the Depression, craved for Germany as a market. The result was that the Democrats did nothing either against Hitler or for the Jews. As a Democrat himself, Wise continued to hold out against a boycott but, while he was in Europe in August 1933, consulting German Jewish leaders and attending the WZ Congress, the more militant elements in the AJC managed to call a boycott. But the AJC was still a thoroughly bourgeois organisation without experience in mass mobilisation and, like the Anti-Nazi League, it timidly opposed picketing. Its boycott director did nothing more strenuous than issue splendid statistics on how the Nazis' trade was being devastated by the boycott.<sup>(2)</sup> It was not until its youth group finally rebelled and picketed a department-store chain in the autumn of 1934 that the AJC allowed its affiliates to picket recalcitrant merchants.

Boycotts are almost never successful. Most people think they have done enough if they stop buying the goods, but a boycott can only work if there is a solid organisation prepared to disrupt trade seriously. The blame for the failure to build that movement lay with many: both Jewish and non-Jewish. Certainly the trade union leaders who pledged their opposition to Hitler, but did nothing to mobilise their ranks were to a large measure responsible for the lack of a serious boycott campaign. Certainly those Jewish groups like the JWV, the Anti-Nazi League and the AJC were ineffectual, but there were those in the Jewish community in America and Britain who specifically opposed the very notion of a boycott. The American Jewish Committee, the B'rnai B'rith (Sons of the Covenant) fraternal order and the Board of Deputies of British Jews refused to back the boycott. They feared that if the Jewish workers, and others as well, took it into their heads to fight Hitler, perhaps they would stay in motion and come after their own rich closer to home. These worthies confined themselves to charity efforts for German Jewry and its refugees and prayed that Hitlerism would not spread. The Agudas Yisrael (Union of Israel), the political arm of the most extreme wing of traditional Orthodoxy, opposed the boycott on religious grounds as well as their social conservatism. They claimed that ever since the ancient Jewish kingdom was destroyed by the Romans, the Talmud had forbidden Jews to revolt against Gentile authority in the Diaspora; they interpreted the boycott as rebellion and therefore forbidden. However, of all of the active Jewish opponents of the boycott idea, the most important was the World Zionist Organisation (WZO). It not only bought German wares; it sold them, and even sought out new customers for Hitler and his industrialist backers.

### **The Appeal of the Blood Idea**

The WZO saw Hitler's victory in much the same way as its German affiliate, the ZVfD: not primarily as a defeat for all Jewry, but as positive proof of the bankruptcy of assimilationism and liberalism. Their own hour was at hand. Zionists began to sound like tent-revivalists: Hitler was history's flail to drive the stiff-necked Jews back to their own kind and their own land. A recent Zionist convert, the then world-famous popular biographer Emil Ludwig, was interviewed by a fellow Zionist on a visit to America and expressed the general attitude of the Zionist movement:

'Hitler will be forgotten in a few years, but he will have a beautiful monument in Palestine. You know', and here the biographer-historian seemed to assume the role of a patriarchal Jew - 'the coming of the Nazis was rather a welcome thing. So many of our German Jews were hovering between two coasts; so many of them were riding the treacherous current between the Scylla of assimilation and the Charybdis of a nodding acquaintance with Jewish things. Thousands who seemed to be completely lost to Judaism were brought back to the fold by Hitler, and for that I am personally very grateful to him.'[(3)]

Ludwig was a newcomer to the movement, but his views were in complete concord with those of such veterans as the celebrated Chaim Nachman Bialik, thought of then as the poet laureate of Zion. Because of his reputation, his statements were given wide circulation both by the Zionist movement and its left-wing enemies. The poet's concern had long been the breakdown of Jewish unity resulting from the decline of traditional religious faith, and now

he could not hide his happiness that Hitler had come just in time to save German Jewry from its own destruction.

Hitlerism, the poet feels, has rendered at least one service in drawing no lines between the faithful Jew and the apostate Jew. Had Hitler excepted the baptized Jews, there would have developed, Bialik contended, the unedifying spectacle of thousands of Jews running to the baptismal fonts. Hitlerism has perhaps saved German Jewry, which was being assimilated into annihilation. At the same time, it has made the world so conscious of the Jewish problem, that they can no longer ignore it. [(4)]

Bialik, like many other Zionists, thought of the Jews as something of a super race; if only they would finally come to their senses and stop wasting themselves on an ungrateful humanity and started working in their own vineyard.

Indeed it is quite true that Judaism, by penetrating into all the nations actually did undermine the remnants of that sort of idolatry... but perhaps the strongest forces in this process were our 'apostate' or 'assimilated' Jews of all types, who entered into the very body of Christianity and stirred its very bowels, and went on slowly undermining the remnants of paganism as a result of their Jewish volition and their Jewish blood. I, too, like Hitler, believe in the power of the blood idea. These were the men-although often the names of great non-Jews are called in their stead-who smoothed the roads for the great movements of freedom all over the world: The Renaissance, Liberalism, Democracy, Socialism and Communism... Anti-Semites sometimes have clear discernment. Jewish influence has indeed been very powerful in this connection; we ought not to deny it. [(5)]

However, by 1934 Zionism was a movement claiming over a million members world-wide and not all of them accepted the upside-down notion that Hitler really was a boon to the Jews. Some, like the American rabbi, Abraham Jacobson, protested against this insane idea, which was still quite widespread even as late as 1936:

How many times have we heard the impious wish uttered in despair over the apathy of American Jews to Zionism, that a Hitler descend upon them? Then they would realize the need for Palestine! [(6)]

### **First Dealings with the Nazis**

Certainly the WZO was quite prepared to try and use the Nazis for their own purposes. The first overtures to the Nazis were made independently in 1933 by one Sam Cohen, the owner of Ha Note'a Ltd, a Tel Aviv citrus export firm. Even under Chancellor Bruning the German government had put a flight tax on capital leaving the country and Cohen had proposed that Zionist emigres be allowed to avoid the tax by purchasing goods in Germany which would later be turned back into cash after sale in Palestine. Bruning had no interest in the idea, but in 1933 Cohen, on his own, presented the plan again. The Nazis were already worried about the effect even the spontaneous and lamentably organised boycott was having on their balance of trade, and Heinrich Wolff, the German Consul in Jerusalem, quickly grasped just how useful Cohen's proposition could be. He wrote to his ministry: 'In

this way it might be possible to wage a successful campaign against the Jewish boycott of Germany. It might be possible to make a breach in the wall.'[(7)]

The Jews, he argued, would be put in a quandary. Further boycott would be seen as imposing problems on emigrants seeking to find new homes for themselves in Palestine or elsewhere. Because of his location, Wolff was one of the first Germans to perceive the growing importance of Palestine in the Jewish equation, and in June he wrote again to Berlin:

Whereas in April and May the Yishuv was waiting boycott instructions from the United States, it now seems that the situation has been transformed. It is Palestine which now gives the instructions... It is important to break the boycott first and foremost in Palestine, and the effect will inevitably be felt on the main front, in the United States. [(8)]

In early May 1933 the Nazis signed an agreement with Cohen for one million Reichmarks (\$400,000) of Jewish wealth to be shipped to Palestine in the form of farm machinery. At this point the WZO intervened. The Depression had badly affected donations and in March 1933 they had desperately cabled to their followers in America pleading that if funds were not forthcoming immediately' they were heading for imminent financial collapse. [(9)] Now Menachem Ussischkin, head of the Jewish National Fund, got Cohen to arrange for the release of frozen JNF monies in Germany via Ha Note'a. The bait for the Nazis was that the cash was needed to buy land for the Jews whom Hitler would be pushing out. Cohen also assured Heinrich Wolff that he would operate 'behind the scenes, at a forthcoming Jewish conference in London to weaken or defeat any boycott resolution'.[(10)] Dr Fritz Reichert, the Gestapo's agent in Palestine, later wrote to his headquarters reminding them of the affair:

The London Boycott Conference was torpedoed from Tel Aviv because the head of the Transfer in Palestine, in close contact with the consulate in Jerusalem, sent cables to London. Our main function here is to prevent, from Palestine, the unification of world Jewry on a basis hostile to Germany... It is advisable to damage the political and economic strength of Jewry by sowing dissension in its ranks.[(11)]

Sam Cohen was soon superseded in these delicate negotiations by Labour Zionist, Chaim Arlosoroff, the Political Secretary of the Jewish Agency, the WZO's Palestine centre. Arlosoroff was keenly aware of the movement's problems. In 1932 he had concluded that they had failed to attract enough immigrants to overcome the Arabs' numbers and they were not drawing enough Jewish capital. Hitler in power would mean war within ten years. To survive in Palestine and solve the Jewish problem in that period meant swift and vigorous action. Now, he thought, he had the way for Zionism to solve its difficulties: with Britain's agreement, they could get both the immigrants and the capital needed through extending Cohen's project. In an article in the Rundschau and elsewhere, he coldly explained that this could only be done in complete co-operation with Berlin:

Naturally, Germany cannot expose herself to the risk of upsetting her currency and exchange balance in order to meet the Jews, but a way out can be found to adjust these



different interests... It would be worth while, leaving all sentimentalities out of the question, to reach such an agreement with Germany.

The self-styled Socialist-Zionist then proposed the ultimate alliance, a deal between the Zionists, the Nazis, the Fascists and the British Empire, to organise the evacuation of Jewry from Germany:

It could also be possible to establish a company, with the participation of the German State and other European, primarily British and Italian interests, which would slowly liquidate the particular properties by issuing letters of credit... [and creatingl... A guarantee fund. [(12)]

He felt his idea was particularly timely because world opinion would support a 'constructive treatment of the Jewish question in Germany'.[(13)] Knowing the German Jews would not want to put all their money in Hitler's hands, he proposed that the British should choose the fund's manager. His comrade Yitzhak Lufban wrote later that 'Arlosoroff suggested several names, and the Colonial Secretary picked one of them'.[14)] In early May 1933, Arlosoroff and the Nazis came to a preliminary understanding to extend Cohen's arrangements. He visited Berlin again in June, and returned to Tel Aviv on 14 June. Two nights later he was assassinated because of his dealings with the Nazis. The killing will be discussed below; it is sufficient to say here that it did not slow down the WZO's accommodation with the Nazis, and a Zionist-Nazi pact was announced by the Nazis in time for the 18th Zionist Congress in August in Prague.

### **The WZO Justifies the Pact with the Nazis**

Hitler's shadow completely dominated the Prague Congress. The WZO's leaders knew that the Nazis were interested in a deal and they determined to avoid offending Germany by limiting discussion of the situation there to the barest minimum.[15)] The regime as such was not condemned. The League of Nations was asked to help in the 'fight for the recovery of the rights of the Jews in Germany', but the request was buried in a lengthy discussion of emigration and Palestine.[16)] No plan was proposed to put pressure on the world body, nor was any specific action called for on the League's part.

The Zionist-Nazi pact became public the day before a boycott resolution was to be debated, and it may be speculated that the Nazis did this so as to discourage endorsement of the boycott. The leader of the right-wing 'Revisionists', Vladimir Jabotinsky, presented the boycott case, but there was no chance of his proposal getting a serious hearing. The British had arrested several of his Revisionists for Arlosoroff's murder and the prosecutor was putting evidence before the court while the Congress met. As the Revisionists had a history of violence against their Zionist rivals, most delegates were convinced of their complicity in the Arlosoroff affair. Their unsavoury reputation was enhanced when Jabotinsky's own brownshirts accompanied him into the hall in full military formation, compelling the presidium to outlaw the uniforms for fear they would provoke Arlosoroff's Labour comrades into a riot. Jabotinsky's support for the boycott, and his opposition to the pact, was dismissed as the raging of a terrorist opponent of the democratically elected moderate

leadership. His resolution was defeated by a vote of 240 to 48.

However, defeating Jabotinsky's resolution did not necessarily mean that the delegates favoured a deal with Hitler and, when the Nazis announced that they had signed an agreement with the Zionists allowing German Jews to ship three million Reichmarks' worth of Jewish wealth to Palestine in the form of German export goods, much of the Congress dismissed the statement as a propaganda stunt. When the truth became clear, pandemonium broke loose. The leadership had completely miscalculated and genuinely expected the pact to be immensely popular. Now, stunned by the hostile opposition, they tried to protect themselves by outright lying; the Labour leader, Berl Locker, brazenly proclaimed: 'the executive of the World Zionist Organisation had nothing to do with the negotiations which led to an agreement with the German government'.<sup>[(17)]</sup> No one believed this crude fabrication.

Many delegates, particularly the Americans, were in favour of the boycott and voted against Jabotinsky, primarily because they felt the WZO was too preoccupied with Palestine to take on additional chores. Now Stephen Wise presented the leadership with an ultimatum: explain 'how to prevent German... propagandists from utilising the agreement'. His demand 'was heatedly discussed all day... by the Political Committee'.<sup>[(18)]</sup> In the end the leaders did not dare take official responsibility for the 'Ha'avara' or Transfer Agreement, and pretended that it only bound Germany and the formal signatory, the Anglo-Palestine Bank. But, since the bank was their own bank, they only succeeded in making themselves look ridiculous to friend and foe alike.

The debate over the Zionist-Nazi pact continued angrily until 1935. The Ha'avara rapidly grew to become a substantial banking and trading house with 137 specialists in its Jerusalem office at the height of its activities. The regulations were always changing in response to Nazi pressure, but in essence the agreement was always the same: German Jews could put money into a bank inside Germany, which was then used to buy exports which were sold outside Germany, usually but not exclusively in Palestine. When the *émigrés* finally arrived in Palestine, they would receive payment for the goods that they had previously purchased after they had finally been sold. Fiscal ingenuity extended Ha'avara's operations in many directions, but throughout its operation its attraction to German Jews remained the same: it was the least painful way of shipping Jewish wealth out of Germany. However, the Nazis determined the rules, and they naturally got worse with time; by 1938 the average user was losing at least 30 per cent and even 50 per cent of his money. Nevertheless, this was still three times, and eventually five times, better than the losses endured by Jews whose money went to any other destination.<sup>[(19)]</sup>

The top limit through the Ha'avara scheme was 50,000 marks (\$20,000 or £4,000) per emigrant, which made the Ha'avara unattractive to the richest Jews. Therefore only \$40,419,000 went to Palestine via Ha'avara, whereas \$650 million went to the United States, \$60 million to the United Kingdom and other substantial sums elsewhere. Yet if, in terms of German Jewry's wealth, Ha'avara was by no means decisive, it was crucial to Zionism. Some 60 per cent of all capital invested in Palestine between August 1933 and September 1939 was channelled through the agreement with the Nazis.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the

British set the annual Jewish immigrant quota, using the weak economic absorptive capacity of the country to limit their number; however, 'capitalists' --those bringing in over £1,000 (\$5,000)-- were allowed in over quota. The 16,529 capitalists were thus an additional source of immigrants as well as an economic harvest for Zionism. Their capital generated a boom, giving Palestine a wholly artificial prosperity in the midst of the world-wide Depression.

At first the WZO tried to defend itself against the charges of boycott-scabbing and outright collaboration by insisting that the Ha'avara transfers did not really break the boycott, since Germany did not receive foreign currency for its goods as they were all purchased inside the country for marks. However, Berlin soon demanded part payment for some of the commodities in foreign currency and soon, too, the WZO started soliciting new customers for Germany in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Eventually the Zionists began exporting oranges to Belgium and Holland using Nazi ships.[(21)] By 1936 the WZO began to sell Hitler's goods in Britain.[(22)]

The WZO was not interested in fighting the Nazis, and every defence of the Ha'avara scheme demonstrated that. Selig Brodetsky, one of the members of the Zionist Executive and later, in 1939, the President of the British Board of Deputies, rebuked the world for scorning them:

Congress had risen to a level to which few Jewish bodies could have risen. It was a very easy thing to use violent words, to organise meetings, to call boycotts, but it was a far more difficult thing to speak calmly and use cool reasoning. It was said that the decisions concerning Germany were too weak. No! Non-Jews could afford to use strong words, but Jews could not.[(23)]

It was not the Zionists who were the traitors, it was everyone else that was out of step --or so at least Moshe Beilenson, a leading Labour Zionist, would have had the world believe. This had not been his first effort at collaboration with Fascism. In 1922 he had been one of the delegation that pledged Italian Zionism's loyalty to Mussolini. Now he tried to present a theoretical defence of the Nazi pact:

after the Ghetto walls had been overthrown, our main weapon for the defense of our lives and our rights was the protest... All our protests in the course of decades did not succeed in destroying the reign of persecution not only in the vast empire of the Tsars, but even in the relatively tiny Rumania...

The Congress did not 'betray'; it triumphed. It was not 'afraid'; on the contrary, it had the courage to initiate a new Jewish statesmanship... Verily, the Eighteenth Congress had the courage to destroy the assimilationist tradition whose chief characteristic is a reliance on others and appeals to others... For generations we fought by means of protests. Now we have another weapon in our hand, a strong, trusty and sure weapon: the visa to Palestine.[(24)]

The great majority of Jews opposed the Ha'avara. It had no defenders outside the WZO, and trading with the Nazis was not popular with many inside its own ranks. Protests started pouring in while the Prague Congress was still in session. The pact was extremely

unpopular in Poland, where the Jews feared that if there was no resistance to the anti-Semitism next door, their own Jew-haters would start demanding that the Polish government imitate the Germans. In America and Britain, each with a more or less democratic tradition, many Zionists, including some of the leading names in the movement, opposed it. The prominent Cleveland rabbi, Abba Hillel Silver, was one of the very first to complain, in August 1933:

Why the very idea of Palestine Jewry negotiating with Hitler about business instead of demanding justice for the persecuted Jews of Germany is unthinkable. One might think that the whole affair was a bankruptcy sale and that the Jews of Palestine were endeavouring to salvage a few bargains for themselves. [(25)]

Lamentations were heard even at the far corners of the earth. The Melbourne *Jewish Weekly News* protested: 'they will make us a laughing-stock among the Germans, who will be able to declare that when it comes to a conflict between Jewish business and sentiment, business always wins'. [(26)] Rabbi Wise returned to the subject on innumerable occasions. In September 1933 he referred to Ha'avara as the 'new golden calf-the Golden Orange' and continued: 'I think I speak the mind of Jews everywhere when I say we hold in abhorrence any Jew, whether in or out of Palestine, who undertakes to make any commercial arrangements with the Nazi government for any reason whatever'. [(27)]

In a speech at a World Jewish Conference at Geneva in 1934, Wise attacked the Labourites who had become the dominant force in Palestinian Zionism:

One leading Palestinian put it over and over again at Prague: Palestine has primacy. This conference must clearly state, that while Palestine has primacy over all other factors in the equation, its primacy ceases when it comes into conflict with a higher moral law. [(28)]

Wise had identified the rot in the WZO: the land of Israel had become far more important than the needs of the people Israel. Labour Zionism had become, in the fullest sense, a utopian cult. They saw a new Jew in the old Jewish land as the only way for a Jewish nation to continue to exist. The real Jewish people, the millions of Jews of the Diaspora, were no more than a reservoir from which they would pick young immigrants to build their state. The Diaspora, as such, was doomed: either the Jews would be driven out, as in Germany, or assimilated as in France. With this strange perspective that Jewish survival stood or fell with them in Israel, the Zionists were driven to seek more from the Nazis to make their vision into a reality.

In late 1933 they tried to revive Arlosoroff's full-scale liquidation bank. Weizmann let Cohen propose to the German Foreign Ministry that he, the former President of the movement, now chairman of its Central Bureau for the Settlement of German Jews, should come to Berlin to discuss the liquidation scheme, but the Nazis declined to extend him an invitation. [(29)] They were always less interested in making a deal with the Zionists than the Zionists were to come to terms with them. The Nazis had achieved what they wanted, the Zionists had broken the boycott and showed no signs of resisting them; for the moment that was enough. But not even that rebuff could throw Weizmann off course. A year and a half later, on 3 July 1935, he wrote to Arthur Ruppin, director of the Colonisation

Department in Palestine, and one of the most devoted apostles of further intimacy with the Nazis:

Dr Moses, as I hear, made contacts with the Reich Ministry for National Economy, and, following a number of talks he had there, submitted a memorandum demanding that eventual additional exports to England, if achieved at the request of our friends in Germany, be used in favor of the £1,000 people. [(30)]

Weizmann went on to make it clear that the Prague Congress statement about the 'fight' for German Jewish rights was strictly lip-service. He discussed Prague in the context of the forthcoming 1935 Lucerne Congress:

I know very well that the Congress in Lucerne can by-pass and take no notice of the German Jewish question just as did the Prague Congress... I dare to doubt if anyone, especially the German Jews and the German Zionists, will gain advantage from the German Jewish question being treated in all thoroughness, moreover in a special report. It will not achieve a positive useful effect especially today, in view of the readiness in the world to come to terms with Germany. On the other hand, I believe it is very possible that such a report may become dangerous to the only positive thing we have in Germany, the intensified Zionist movement... We, being a Zionist Organisation, should concern ourselves with the constructive solution of the German question through the transfer of the Jewish youth from Germany to Palestine, rather than with the question of equal rights of Jews in Germany. [(31)]

'Constructive', it will be recalled, was always one of Weizmann's favourite clichés; after the First World War he had assured the capitalists at Versailles that Zionism was constructive, unlike the behaviour of those Jews who engaged in 'destructive tendencies'. 'Constructive' thinking with regard to Hitler, so widespread in capitalist circles of the day, was extraordinary coming from a Jew, but of course High Zionism was a world away from the ordinary Jewish mentality. Weizmann's friend, the German-born Ruppin, was a good case in point. A race improver, it was he who was in charge of turning middle-class youths into 'constructive' toilers on health-giving Jewish *boden*. In 1934 his book, *Jews in the Modern World*, openly expressed the accommodationist line of the Zionist movement. In it he told the Jews, again, that it was their fault that things had occurred in the way they had, and he admonished them that:

Such an attempt at a peaceful settlement of the problem would have been possible if... Jews... had recognized that their peculiar position among the Germans was bound to lead to conflicts which had their origin in the nature of man, and couldn't be removed by arguments and reason. Had both sides realized that the present position was due not to bad will but to circumstances, which had arisen independently of the will of either side, it would have been unnecessary to attempt the solution of the Jewish problem in an orgy of unbridled hatred.

His 'misunderstanding, theory developed logically into his concluding: 'Various intermediate and partial solutions will be required to reach a *modus vivendi*. [(32)]

Lewis Namier, a former Political Secretary of the WZO, and a major historian of the

British aristocracy, had prefaced Ruppin's book. Knowledgeable Zionists, including Nahum Goldmann, saw Namier as an intense Jewish anti-Semite. [(33)] In his devotion to the gentry, he despised the Jews as the epitome of capitalism, of vulgar 'trade'. As might be expected, his introduction expressed his 'understanding' of anti-Semitism --'not everyone who feels uncomfortable with regard to us must be called an anti-Semite, nor is there anything necessarily and inherently wicked in anti-Semitism'. [(34)] In fact the original draft was even stronger. Weizmann had read it and had to warn Namier not to be so open in expressing their mutual toleration of Nazism:

On p. 6 the lines 'but what has happened etc.' marked in pencil seem to me dangerous, although I agree with your conclusion. But it's a book by Ruppin and a preface by you and it will be quoted in Germany and the 'louts, will say, 'the Jews themselves think that it will be all for the good, etc.' I would omit it if possible. [(35)]

Such were the minds of the leading figures of the Zionist movement in 1935 as they trooped into their summer Congress at Lucerne. Publicly on record as denying that the Ha'avara had anything to do with them, secretly they were doing all they could to extend it. In every respect their thinking and their policies were at odds with the immense majority of the Jews of the world.

### **'Trying to Derive the utmost Advantage from it in the Zionist Sense'**

The Zionist leadership still had to face one last internal battle over the Ha'avara and their general stance toward the Nazis. Jabotinsky and his Revisionists had split off from the WZO, but a remnant of his followers --now called the *Judenstaat Partei* (Jewish State Party)-- had stayed loyal to the WZO and still demanded repudiation of the Transfer. Several journalists described the short but ferocious debate at the 1935 Congress. *The Canadian Zionist* reported that:

A vote was taken and resulted in Mr Grossman's motion [for a debate on whether the Anglo-Palestinian Bank had caused the arrest of picketers who had protested the use of German cement] being defeated. Whereupon there were loud derisive cries of 'Heil Hitler!' on the part of some of Mr Grossman's supporters. This caused pandemonium. [(36)]

Paul Novick, the editor of the American Communist daily newspaper, the *Morgen Freiheit*, related that the 'Histadrut delegates answered in kind, shouting towards the Judenstaat people: "Schuschnigg agents" (meaning agents of Italo-Austrian Fascism). [(37)]

The Executive's policy toward Hitler had stout defenders at the Congress. A theoretical defence was presented by Moshe Shertok, who had succeeded Arlosoroff as the organisation's Political Secretary (their equivalent to Foreign Minister). The man who later became the second Prime Minister of Israel sternly told the delegates, and the listening Jewish world, that they just had to realise that:

The Jewish people had no greater hope for success in the struggle for existence than through the upbuilding of Eretz Israel, and they must, therefore, be willing to draw

the consequences. They imitated the protests and boycotts practised by other peoples, but forgot that those measures were expressions of the force possessed by those peoples, whereas the Zionist movement had yet to create such a force for itself.[(38)]

Beyond the Congress some of the most important propagandists of the WZO's strategy were the *shliachim* or emissaries sent out worldwide by the Labour Zionists in Palestine. Enzo Sereni, another graduate of the accommodationist Italian movement, had been the emissary in Germany in 1931-2, but he had done nothing to either mobilise the German Jews or assist the SPD in their fight against the Nazis. Sereni was one of those who saw Hitler as a scourge driving Jewry toward Zionism. He once informed Max Ascoli, an Italian anti-Fascist activist, that 'Hitler's anti-Semitism might yet lead to the salvation of the Jews'.<sup>39</sup> At the Lucerne Congress he was the vigorous exponent of the primacy of Palestine:

We have nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that we used the persecution of the Jews in Germany for the upbuilding of Palestine. That is how our sages and leaders of old have taught us... to make use of the catastrophes of the Jewish population in the Diaspora for upbuilding.[(40)]

But by far the best example of the leadership's unwillingness to resist the Nazis was Weizmann's statement:

The only dignified and really effective reply to all that is being inflicted upon the Jews of Germany is the edifice erected by our great and beautiful work in the Land of Israel... Something is being created that will transform the woe we all suffer into songs and legends for our grand-children.[(41)]

The presidium manoeuvred to keep any serious discussion of resistance off the Congress floor, and Wise's name was struck from the speakers' list for fear that he would denounce Hitler. He threatened to walk out of the Congress if he was not allowed to speak and, as the Congress knew they could not afford to have the most famous Zionist in America walk out on such a controversial issue, they finally gave way and let him speak. He duly got up, said that he was opposed to Hitler --hardly a statement that would have attracted attention in most other company-- and sat down. He and Abba Hillel Silver had never really done much more than talk about boycott, and by 1935 there was nothing in America that remotely resembled an effective boycott organisation. In practice, they had no alternative programme for effective resistance; now, primarily focusing on Palestine as a refuge for German Jewry, they capitulated to Weizmann and endorsed the Ha'avara, and after the Lucerne Congress there were no longer any serious differences between them and the international movement. In the end the only official protest against Hitlerism made by the assembly was a half-day cancellation of one of their sessions, a meaningless gesture.

Weizmann had little real difficulty getting the Congress formally to endorse the Ha'avara, but the opposition was able to curb one of its activities. A Ha'avara subsidiary, the Near and Middle East Commercial Corporation (NEMICO), had been set up to solicit new customers for Germany throughout the Middle East. The Egyptian Zionist Federation had threatened to expose the scandal if the world organisation did not put a stop to it, and in the

interests of preserving the larger scheme the leadership reluctantly had to sacrifice the NEMICO operation.

The capitulation of the Americans did nothing to quieten Jewish opposition elsewhere. Press criticism was immediate. *London's World Jewry*, then the best Zionist magazine in the English language, excoriated their own World Congress: 'Dr Weizmann went as far as to state that the only dignified reply the Jews could give was a renewed effort for the upbuilding of Palestine. How terrifying the proclamation of the Congress President must have sounded in the ears of Herren Hitler, Streicher and Goebbels!'[(42)]

The unofficial Zionist press in Britain shared the growing public feeling that war with Hitler was inevitable, and it could not understand the total lack of serious discussion of Nazism at the Congress. The magazine's correspondent described the meeting as strangely depressing: 'We have an agenda more suitable for a board of directors of a limited liability company than for a national conclave with the national destiny in its hands.'[(43)] Even the *Jewish Chronicle*, always the mouthpiece of the Jewish establishment, complained in the same vein: 'the proceedings were almost as dull as a debate on the Colonial Office in the House of Commons on a Friday morning'[(44)] It felt compelled to condemn the decision on the Ha'avara:

The spectacle is puzzling to the world, whose sympathy we bespeak and disheartening to Jews for whom the boycott is one of the few weapons to their hand and who now see themselves deserted by the Movement which they most have a right to claim as an ally in their fight.[(45)]

In America the opposition to the Ha'avara was particularly intense in the garment industry trade unions, with their hundreds of thousands of Jewish workers. Most of the Jewish labour leaders had always looked upon Zionism with contempt. Many of them were from Russia and knew about the fateful Herzl-Plevhe meeting and how their old enemy Zubatov had backed the Poale Zionists against the Bund. As far as they were concerned the Ha'avara was just Zionism up to its old tricks, and in December 1935 Baruch Charney Vladeck, the Chairman of the Jewish Labor Committee, and himself an ex-Bundist from Poland, debated Berl Locker, the organisational head of the Palestinian Poale Zion, before an overflow crowd in New York.

Locker was compelled to take a defensive position, insisting that the agreement was purely in the interest of the German Jews. Besides, he argued, they would have brought the goods into the country on their own if there were no treaty. Why, if it had not been for the pact, he maintained, the situation would have been far worse in this regard: 'Palestine was presented by a *fait accompli*... The Transfer agreement prevents the country from being flooded with German merchandise, since goods come in only as there is need of them.'[(46)]

Vladeck was not to be put off by Locker's obvious subterfuge, and he continued the attack. In New York the local Labour Zionists were simultaneously supporting the boycott in the United States while apologising for the Ha'avara in Palestine, and the old Bundist ridiculed their attempt to run with the fox and hunt with the hounds:



You may argue from now till Doomsday, but this is double bookkeeping of the most flagrant sort. That nobody should break the boycott but the Jews of Palestine! And nobody deal with Germany but the Zionist organisation!... It is my contention that the main purpose of the Transfer is not to rescue the Jews from Germany but to strengthen various institutions in Palestine... Palestine thus becomes the official scab-agent against the boycott in the Near East... When the news of the Transfer Agreement first came out... Berl Locker said: 'Not a single Zionist agency has the slightest connection with the Transfer'... From this I can conclude in only one vein: The Transfer Agreement is a blot on the Jews and on the world. [(47)]

If the majority of Jews did oppose the Ha'avara as treason, there was one at least who was willing to go on record as complaining that Weizmann and his friends were not going far enough. Gustav Krojanker, whose views on the Nazis were discussed in Chapter 3, was now one of the leaders of the *Hitachdut Olei Germania* (the German Immigrants Association in Palestine), and in 1936 the association published his pamphlet, *The Transfer: A Vital Question of the Zionist Movement*. To him Zionism was stark calculation, nothing more, and he was more than willing to draw the logical conclusions already inherent in the Zionist-Nazi pact. He claimed to see Nazism and the opportunities it opened up for Zionism in the authentic Herzlian manner:

His survey of the situation was devoid of any futile grudge-bearing; he perceived two political factors --an organisation of the Jewish people on the one side, and the countries concerned on the other. They were to be partners in a pact.

Krojanker berated the leadership for not having the courage to formally endorse the Ha'avara back in 1933. To him this was merely a capitulation to what he considered the 'Diaspora mentality'. He wanted them to go much further:

The Zionist Movement should have endeavoured... to influence the German Government to enter into a statesmanlike treaty, accepting the situation and trying to derive the utmost advantage from it in the Zionist sense.

He insisted that the necessary next step was to help the Nazis break the boycott in Europe itself through an extension of the Ha'avara. Germany 'might even be ready to conclude agreements--if we... prepared to extend the "Ha'avara" system to other countries'. [(48)] But the WZO leadership needed no such coaching from Krojanker. He did not know that, secretly, they had already decided to do just that and now, in March 1936, Siegfried Moses's negotiations had finally created the International Trade and Investment Agency (INTRIA) bank in London to organise sales of German products directly in Britain itself. [(49)] The Nazis had to content themselves with the satisfaction of the further demoralisation of the boycott forces, as fear of Jewish and general British hostility to boycott--scabbing made it impossible for INTRIA to go so far as to allow British currency to come directly into German hands. Instead, the goods were bought in Germany for marks and their value was credited to Jewish capitalists needing the £1,000 entry fee required of over-quota immigrants into Palestine. Zionist-Nazi trade relations continued to develop in other spheres as well. In 1937 200,000 crates of the 'Golden Oranges' were shipped to Germany, and 1/2 million more to the Low Countries under the swastika flag. [(50)] Even after *Kristallnacht* --11 November 1938, the terrible night of the broken glass, when the

Nazis finally unleashed the brownshirts to smash Jewish stores-- the manager of Ha'avara Ltd, Werner Felchenfeld, continued to offer reduced rates to would-be users of Nazi boats. His only concern was to reassure the squeamish that 'competition with British vessels does not arise, as this transfer arrangement is valid for citrus being shipped to Dutch and Belgian ports, British ports being expressly excluded'.[(51)]

***'What Matters in a Situation of this sort is a People's Moral Stance'***

Of course it was the Nazis who were the prime gainers from Ha'avara. Not only did it help them push out a few extra Jews, but it was of immense value abroad, providing the perfect rationale for all those who still wanted to continue trading with the Germans. In Britain, Sir Oswald Mosley's newspaper, the *Blackshirt*, loved it:

Can you beat that! We are cutting off our nose to spite our face and refuse to trade with Germany in order to defend the poor Jews. The Jews themselves, in their own country, are to continue making profitable dealings with Germany themselves.

Fascists can't better counter the malicious propaganda to destroy friendly relations with Germany than by using this fact.[(52)]

The final evaluation of the WZO's role during the Holocaust cannot be made until the other interrelationships between the Zionists and the Nazis are properly dealt with; however, a preliminary appraisal of Ha'avara can now be safely attempted. All excuses that it saved lives must be strictly excluded from serious consideration. No Zionist in the 1930s thought that Hitler was going to try to exterminate the Jews of either Germany or Europe, and no one tried to defend Ha'avara during its operation in those terms. The excuse was that it saved wealth, not lives. In fact, at the very best, it directly helped a few thousand Jews with money, by allowing them to enter Palestine after the British quotas had been allocated and indirectly it provided an opportunity for others by boosting the Palestinian economy. But every genuine opponent of Nazism understood that once Hitler had taken power and had German Jewry in his claws, the struggle against him could not possibly be curbed by an over-concern for their fate; they were essentially prisoners of war. The battle still had to go on. Naturally no one wished those unfortunates any more grief than necessary, but to have brought the campaign against Nazism to a standstill out of concern for the German Jews would only have accelerated Hitler's further march into Europe. While the WZO was busy saving the property, or, more properly, a piece of the property of the German Jewish bourgeoisie, the '£1,000 people', thousands of Germans --including many Jews-- were fighting in Spain, against Hitler's own Condor Legion and Franco's Fascist army. The Ha'avara certainly assisted the Nazis in that it demoralised Jews, some of whom were Zionists, by spreading the illusion that it was possible to come to some sort of *modus vivendi* with Hitler. It also demoralised non-Jews to know that a world-wide Jewish movement was prepared to come to terms with its enemy. Certainly the Ha'avara removed the million-strong Zionist movement from the front line of anti-Nazi resistance. The WZO did not resist Hitler, but sought to collaborate with him and, as can be seen in the proposals of Arlosoroff and Weizmann for a liquidation bank, only Nazi unwillingness to extend their linkage prevented the development of an even greater degree of co-operation. Those Zionists, as with *World Jewry*, who tried to oppose Hitler, must also be severely faulted for their own failure to create an effective Jewish, or even Zionist, boycott machine, but at

least they must be credited with some moral stature in that they tried to do something to attack the Nazis. By comparison Weizmann, Shertok and their co-thinkers lose our respect, even if we only set them against their Zionist critics and ignore all other Jewish opinion. At best, it can be said of Weizmann and his ilk that they were the equivalent of Neville Chamberlain; moral and political failures. After the war and the Holocaust, a contrite and remorseful Nahum Goldmann, mortified at his own shameless role during the Hitler epoch, wrote of a dramatic meeting he had with the Czech Foreign Minister, Edvard Benes, in 1935. Goldmann's vivid account of Benes's warning to the Jews says all that will ever need to be said on the Ha'avara and the abject failure of the WZO to resist the Nazis:

'Don't you understand', he shouted, 'that by reacting with nothing but half-hearted gestures, by failing to arouse world public opinion and take vigorous action against the Germans, the Jews are endangering their future and their human rights all over the world?'... I knew Benes was right... in this context success was irrelevant. What matters in a situation of this sort is a people's moral stance, its readiness to fight back instead of helplessly allowing itself to be massacred.[(53)]

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**AJC American Jewish Committee -bourgeois assimilationist organisation.**

**AJC American Jewish Congress-Zionist organisation identified with rabbi Stephen Wise.**

**AK Armia Krajowa (Home Army)-Polish underground affiliated to the government-inexile.**

**BUF British Union of Fascists.**

**CID British Criminal Investigation Division.**

**CPUSA Communist Party of USA.**

**CV Centralverein (Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith)-assimilationist defence organisation.**

**DDP Deutsche Demokratische Partei (German Democratic Party).**

**Endeks National Democrats-antiSemitic Polish party.**

**HOG Hitachdut Olei Germania (German Immigrants, Association in Palestine).**

**ILP Independent Labour Party-British socialist organisation.**

**INTRIA International Trade and Investment Agency - Zionistorganised company selling German goods in Britain.**

**JFO Jewish Fighting Organisation-underground movement in the Warsaw ghetto.**

**JLC Jewish Labor Committee-antiZionist labour union organisation in America.**

**JNF Jewish National Fund-Zionist agricultural fund.**

**JnP Judischenationale Partei (Jewish National Party)-Austrian Zionist party.**

**JPC Jewish People's Council-community defence group against Mosleyites in Britain.**

**JWV Jewish War Veterans-rightwing American exserviceman's grouping.**

**KB Korpus Bezpieczenstwa (Security Corps)-Polish underground movement friendly to the Revisionists.**

**KPD Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany).**

**KPP Komunistyczna Partja Polski (Communist Party of Poland).**

**Naras National Radicals-extreme antiSemitic Polish party.**

**NEMICO-Near and Middle East Commercial Corporation-Zionist company selling German goods in the Middle East.**

**NPP-National Peasant Party-Romanian party.**

**NSDAP-Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party).**

**NZO-New Zionist Organisation-Revisionist international organisation.**

**POUM-Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (Workers, Party of Marxist Unity)-Spanish leftwing party.**

**PPS-Polska Partya Socyalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party).**

**SDSicherheitsdienst (Security Service of the SS).**

**SPD-Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany).**

**SS-Schutzstaffel (Protection Corps).**

**SWP-Socialist Workers Party-American Trotskyist party.**

**VnJ-Verband nationaldeutscher Juden (Union of NationalGerman Jews) - proNazi Jewish assimilationist movement.**

**WJC-World Jewish Congress.**

**WZO-World Zionist Organisation.**

**ZOA-Zionist Organisation of America -a rightwing Zionist movement.**

**ZVfD-Zionistische Vereinigung fur Deutschland (Zionist Federation of Germany).**

# **GLOSSARY OF JEWISH AND ZIONIST ORGANISATIONS**

**Agudas Yisrael Union of Israel-an antiZionist Orthodox movement.**

**Alliance Israelite Universelle French Jewish philanthropy.**

**American Jewish Committee Rightwing assimilationist grouping.**

**American Jewish Congress Zionistdominated organisation identified with rabbi Stephen Wise.**

**American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Major bourgeois overseas charity.**

**AngloPalestine Bank Zionist bank in Palestine.**

**Betar Revisionist youth organisation. See Revisionists.**

**B'nai B'rith Sons of the Covenant - conservative assimilationist fraternal order.**

**Board of Deputies of British Jews Major Jewish organisation in Britain.**

**Brit HaBiryonim Union of Terrorists - Revisionist Fascist organisation.**

**Brith HaChayal Union of Soldiers.**

**Brith Hashomrim Union of Watchmen-Revisionist organisation in Nazi Germany.**

**Bund General Jewish Workers League-Yiddish socialist movement in Russia and Poland; antiZionist.**

**Central Bureau for the Settlement of German Jews Headed by Chaim Weizmann, it organised German immigration to Palestine.**

**Centralverein Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith -defence organisation of assimilationist bourgeoisie.**

**Comite des Delegations Juives Committee of Jewish Delegations- postFirst World War international Jewish defence organisation dominated by Zionists.**

**Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs Official voice of World Zionist Organisation in the United States during the Second World War.**

**Far Eastern Jewish Council Organisation of Japanese collaborators.**



**General Zionists Bourgeois Zionists divided into rival factions.**

**Gentile Friends of Zionism ProPalestine Committee in Austria.**

**Ha'avara Ltd. Trading company set up by World Zionist Organisation to trade with Nazi Germany.**

**Hadassah Zionist women's organisation.**

**Haganah Underground militia in Palestine, dominated by Labour Zionists.**

**Ha Note 'a Ltd. Citrus corporation in Palestine which entered into trade agreement with Nazi Germany.**

**HaPoel The Worker-Labour Zionist sports movement.**

**Hashomer Hatzair Young Watchmen-left Zionist youth movement.**

**HeChalutz Pioneers-Labour Zionist youth movement.**

**Histadrut General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine.**

**Hitachdut Olei Germania German Immigrants' Association in Palestine.**

**International Trade and Investment Agency British affiliate of Ha'avara Ltd.**

**Irgun Zvei Leumi National Military Organisation-Revisionist underground.**

**Jabotinsky Institute Revisionist research centre.**

**Jewish Agency for Palestine Central office of World Zionist Organisation in Palestine; originally it nominally included nonZionist sympathisers.**

**Jewish Colonial Trust Zionist bank.**

**Jewish Fighting Organisation One of two Jewish underground movements in the Warsaw ghetto, incorporating the leftZionist youth groups, the Bund and the Communists.**

**Jewish Labor Committee American organisation, dominated by Bundist sympathisers, antiZionist in 1930s.**

**Jewish Legion Zionist military organisation in British Army during conquest of Palestine in the First World War.**

**Jewish National Fund Zionist land fund.**

**Jewish Party (Romania) Zionist party.**

**Jewish People's Committee (USA) Communist front group.**

**Jewish People's Council Community defence movement against Mosleyites in Britain.**

**Jewish Telegraphic Agency Zionist news service.**

**Jewish War Veterans Rightwing American exservicemen's organisation.**

**Joint Boycott Council of the American Jewish Congress and the Jewish Labor Committee AntiNazi boycott organisation.**

**Judenrat Jewish Council-Nazi puppet council in the ghettos.**

**Judenstaat Partei Jewish State Party - Revisionist splinter group, post1934, loyal to World Zionist Organisation.**

**Judischenationale Partei Jewish National Party-Austrian Zionist party.**

**Judischer Verlag Jewish publishers - German Zionist publishing house.**

**Judische Volkspartei Jewish People's Party rightwing party in German Jewish communal politics, dominated by Zionists.**

**Keren Hayesod Palestine Foundation Fund.**

**Labour Zionists See Poale Zion.**

**Left Poale Zion Labour Zionist splinter grouping with a strong Yiddishist orientation.**

**Leo Baeck Institute German Jewish exile research organisation.**

**Lohamei Herut Yisrael Fighters for the Freedom of Israel - Stern GangRevisionist splinter group.**

**Maccabi Zionist sports organisation.**

**Minorities Bloc Coalition of bourgeois nationalists in Poland set up by Polish Zionists.**

**Mizrachi Religious Zionist party.**

**Mossad Bureau in charge of illegal immigration for World Zionist Organisation.**

**Naftali Botwin Company Yiddishspeaking unit with International Brigades in Spain.**

**Nationale Jugend Ierzlia Revisionist youth movement in Nazi Germany.**

**Near and Middle East Commercial Corporation (NEMI CO) Affiliated to Ha'avara Ltd.**

**New Zionist Organisation Revisionist international organisation set up in 1935.**

**NonSectarian AntiNazi League AntiNazi boycott organisation of the 1930s.**

**Ordenergrupe Defence groups of the Bund in Poland.**

**Organisation of Jewish Centre Party Voters Grouping of Jewish capitalists who voted for Catholic Centre Party.**

**Palestine Labour Party Labour Zionist party in Palestine; see Poale Zion.**

**Palestine Offices Fourteen worldwide offices for immigration to Palestine.**

**Poale Zion Workers of Zion - Labour Zionists.**

**Polish Zionist Organisation Mainline Zionist federation.**

**Radical Zionists Bourgeois Zionist faction, later merged with a faction of the General Zionists.**

**Reichstag Elections Committee Shortlived Jewish bourgeois grouping for 1930 election.**

**Reichsverband judischer Kulturebunde German Union of Jewish Culture Leagues - segregationist organisation established by Nazis.**

**Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden Reich Representation of Jews in Germany- united organisation of Jewish bourgeoisie under the Nazis.**

**Revisionists Political party established by Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1925.**

**Staatszionistische Organisation State Zionist Organisation- Revisionist movement in Nazi Germany, technically unaffiliated to world Revisionist movement.**

**Stern Gang Lohamei Herut Yisrael - Fighters for the Freedom of Israel.**

**Swit Dawn-Revisionist underground movement in Poland under the Nazis.**

**Tnuat HaHerut Freedom Movement-Revisionist party in Israel, founded by Menachem Begin.**

**United Jewish Parties Czechoslovakian Jewish electoral bloc including Zionists.**

**Vaad Hazalah Jewish Agency's Rescue Committee during the Holocaust.**

**Vaad Leumi National Council-semigovernment of Zionist settlement under the British.**

**Working Group Jewish rescue group in Slovakia.**

**World Jewish Congress ProZionist Jewish defence organisation established in 1936.**

**World Zionist Organisation Central body of Zionist movement.**

**Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority Israeli Holocaust Institute.**

**Zidovska Strana Jewish Party Zionist party in Czechoslovakia.**

**Zion Mule Corp Zionist unit with British Army in the First World War.**

**Zionist Organisation of America Equivalent of General Zionists.**

**Zionistische Vereinigung fdr Deutschland Zionist Federation of Germany.**

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